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POMP AND CIRCUMSTANCE

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POMP AND CIRCUMSTANCE

BY E. DE GRAMONT, EX-DUCHESSE DE CLERMONT-TONNERRE. TRANSLATED BY BRIAN W. DOWNS. INTRODUCTION BY LOUIS BROMFIELD

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INTRODUCTION

BOOKS OF MEMOIRS MAY BE ANYTHING FROM solid political history to the most minute and intimate accounts of the inner life of an individual. They may range from the most brilliantly written and constructed work dealing with people of fascination to the memories of an old lady who has lived in proximity with the great and catalogues their procession conscientiously without a single illuminating detail; but however bad they may be, there is always an interest lurking in them which is not to be found in a bad or even a mediocre novel. I think that very often in the case of dull memoirs the interest is supplied by the reader rather than by the book; it is created by the almost physical hunger of the human race for the actuality which one finds outside memoirs only in excellent novels. The talent of the absorbing memoirist and that of the skilful novelist are closely akin, for both must share an

abnormal curiosity concerning their friends, their enemies, their acquaintances and even concerning individuals they have never seen. Both must possess an indelicate passion for watching at dinners, in the street or even in the deep intimacy of confidences, the smallest gesture or inflection used by fellow members of the human race. Both must feed upon gossip, for it is from the raw material of gossip that the fabric of most good novels and all good memoirs is woven. They are quite frankly "nosey." They are dangerous people to have in your midst. Their cold-blooded sense of detachment is born with them, as much a part of them as their livers. They are never quite honestly one with any group of which they are a part for they are always watching the others and sometimes even themselves. It is not always a passion to be desired but it is one quite as strong as that of a passionate scientist searching beneath the lense of his microscope for a new and elusive organism. Usually the passion is much stronger than the sense of discretion, for in writers the sense of discretion is not always overstrong and there have been cases known like that of Rousseau where

writers have been born quite innocent of it. Out of the victories of indiscretion have been written many great novels and all great memoirs.

To the end of time the prigs will assert that discretion is the better part of memory, but in this they are quite wrong for if we followed their contention we should rob the world of far too much that is amusing and more often than not of priceless value. Everything, and most of all bad conduct, must be weighed to find its worth. The strong person is the one who considers his act and indulges his remorse before he commits it. I cannot believe that all the discretion in the world rolled into one lump can outweigh the entertainment to be found in a half dozen chapters of Saint-Simon, and the Duc was a veritable monument of indiscretion, even about himself. As footnotes to history memoirs are of an incalculable value. When the scholarly historian has tied up and laid aside a period with each date correct and each character properly labelled in zinc, there remains amid the dustiness a sense of something lacking. The lack is not difficult to identify. Almost always it is a sense of humanity, a feeling of actuality. Only a

few historians—Froude and Hume and in our day Strachey—have possessed the gifts of the novelist and the memoirist, and it is only in their histories that men and women live and breathe.

We do not read in ten volume histories of France that de Lauzun hid beneath the bed of Madame de Montespan to overhear her conversation with Louis Quatorze, nor that the great king liked best to pass his leisure hours with simple men like the great architect-gardener Le Notre, nor have we, outside memoirs, any record of the tragi-comic romance of the scamp de Lauzun and the elderly but impetuous Grande Mademoiselle. It is only Saint-Simon who succeeded, despite even his own snobbery, in shattering the isolation which reduced the greatest of the Monarchs of the Divine Right to the level of a cardboard figure. But for Saint-Simon the façade of history in the French Eighteenth century would be marred by innumerable missing cornices and embrasures. One can almost say that he alone took its ornamentation in hand and reduced it balanced and complete. In our time he would have been a successful novelist for he had the gift beyond all doubt. To-day we have

not only forgotten his indiscretions but we are conscious of an immeasurable debt to him for them. He remains one of the famous names of his time. In the span of history the Brahmin's disputable accusation of poor taste simply becomes invisible. None of us is so important as to remain sacred, and the stream of human history is far more important than a whole generation rolled into one basket.

Good memoirs have always been the province of the French. It was Saint-Simon who invented them. It is the gossip in the letters of Madame de Sevigné which is far more important and entertaining than the elegant and sometimes affected style in which she wrote them, for life is always more important than letters. It was Proust who wrote a beautiful and colossal novel so near to being a book of pure reminiscence that our great grandchildren, armed perhaps with a guide book, are likely to regard it as just that. The Gallic acuteness of mind, preoccupation with manner, and concern for detail divined long ago that we must discover the true index to a man's character in the small things. A man may be all graciousness and

charm in public but we do not know him until we have seen him being rude to his servant. A statesman may be a veritable monument of public virtue but the statue is incomplete if we have not seen him abusing his wife or furtively entering the door of a house in a side street. For all of us are human and possessed of weakness, great, small or both, and those who believe in the God-like must either be imbeciles or hypocrites. And certainly no one, even the prigs, will dispute the assertion that a human sinner is more interesting than a cardboard saint.

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It is more than two years since the surface of intelligent Paris life was ruffled by the breeze of a rumour that Madame de Gramont was engaged in writing the first volume of her memoirs. The rumour was received on the one hand with anticipatory chuckles and on the other by something very akin to panic. Madame de Gramont was a figure in the French world. She had known more circles of representative social and intellectual life than perhaps any woman of her time. She had a

literary talent that was not a "society" talent. She possessed wit, and cultivation, a retentive memory, and she had seen and heard much. She was witty, frank, honest and spirited.

She was born to a great position, the eldest daughter of one of the greatest houses of France, in the midst of the Faubourg Saint Germain which so impressed Henry James and other Americans at the troubled period of our national adolescence. Under such conditions her life should have been very simple and conventional; but there were signs of a disturbing energy in the heritage of the child. Her grandfather, breaking with the hopelessly lost Royalist cause, had served as statesman under the energetic if somewhat misguided Napoleon Third. For this crime he was forced to seek a wife outside the Faubourg and married a Scotswoman. It was doubtless this blood which permitted his granddaughter to escape from the beginning that intensely nationalistic point of view which among the French so often crosses the border in provincialism. In all the world there is nothing more delightful than a cosmopolitan Frenchman and nothing more boring than a provincial one.

The life which lay before the small Mademoiselle de Gramont could not be said to hold the prospect either of colour or variety. There was wealth and there was social position but these very things raised walls all about her shutting her in. For a woman it was a life almost as narrow as the purdah of a high caste Brahmin wife. The pattern was set on the day of her birth. She would grow up with the refined and somewhat stuffy education considered suitable to *jeune fille* of high station. At eighteen she would be placed upon the marriage market at countless pompous balls and receptions held in houses filled with oceans of red carpet and hundreds of crystal stalactites lighted by gas. At the proper moment she would make a suitable match and afterward bear as many children as possible (for this too was the law of the Catholic-Royalist society) and after middle age she would sink slowly into an obscure and tedious old age spent between a great red-carpeted house in Paris and a damp chateau somewhere in a remote province. If she was mildly "literary" in the water colour fashion of ladies in the Nineteenth century she might write a discreet volume of memoirs to be

published at her husband's expense and distributed at New Year to "mon cousin this" and "ma cousine that," for in the world of Mademoiselle de Gramont's pattern, everyone was a cousin of everyone else.

But the little girl grew up filled with an interest in books and a curiosity about life and she followed the pattern only so far as marriage. Soon afterward something happened and like a child playing alone in a damp close garden, she heard the sound of the carrousel at the fair. She became aware that beyond the walls there was a great and fascinating world of which she knew nothing. Not so many years afterward the garden fell into decay, its walls shattered by the war, by the automobile, by the great industrialists and a hundred other things which grew out of the four years in which Europe lived a century; and the spell which enchanted the garden vanished like thin mist. It was a garden which Proust knew well and before he died he wrote that it had vanished for ever. But when Madame de Gramont made her escape the walls were still high and forbidding, and it was no easy task to get free.

She has described her first naïve and stumbling step toward freedom. Drawn by the glamour which surrounded the great Anatole France she went humble and trembling to the salon of Madame de Caillevet, the Egeria who made the old man work and talk and show himself off properly to visitors. The young fugitive, Madame de Gramont writes, was dressed "in a beautiful white gown long and bouffant, embroidered in spring flowers, beneath a huge hat decorated with a thousand plumes of every colour of the rainbow."

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Last spring I saw Madame de Gramont at Laurents in the Champs-Elysées. It was May and we sat in the sun under the chestnut trees having cocktails—five people of as many nationalities, all like my own middle-western self from worlds as remote in their backgrounds and conventions and colours from the Faubourg Saint Germain as Singapore is remote from London. She was dressed in a smart tailored suit and a tight small felt hat and on the hat there was not a single feather. Her

hair was shingled. She was a figure vigorous, young and charged with interest in everything about her.

Between the hat of a thousand plumes and the plain hat of beige felt lay a whole lost world which Madame de Clermont-Tonnerre had watched with the detachment and the passionate interest of the perfect writer of memoirs. Through that world she had seen pass a whole procession of figures, great and small—artists, actors, writers, politicians, statesmen. She had known almost everyone in the Paris that was vanished and was vanishing and she knew too the new Paris that had taken its place. She had been the friend of the giants Proust and Remy de Gourmont and Anatole France who like the Gods left no successors. And while she talked, as wittily as she writes, I envied her as any novelist envies someone whose life is rich and full with experience and I admired her as all of us must admire the elect who possess the courage and the power to steer a strong, straight course through the complexities of this difficult existence. It is such people who understand how short life is and so make an art of it.

iv

The book appeared and Paris was not disappointed. It bought edition after edition and copies were carried off into England and Italy and America and Spain, for it is not a narrow book confined alone to Parisians, and its point of view is cosmopolitan. It was called "Au Temps des Equipages" a rich and perfect title, for the days when carriages rolled on rubber tires between the private hotels of the Champs-Elysées are almost as remote as the Paris of François Villon from a Champs-Elysées where there are no more private hotels and in each house there is a shop window exposing to the public the twentieth century beauties of Cadillacs and Packards and Lincolns, and where the trees die from the carbon monoxide shot from the exhaust pipes of thousands of noisy motors. The old world has been shattered and only the fragments remain, hidden away in damp provincial chateaus or the old quarters of Paris. On the Eiffel Tower stars glitter and lightning flashes and for miles into the country one can read the name of Citroën painted in fire against the sky. And it is this new

force and not the vanished Faubourg which carried France through trying years to survive.

There are no more salons where genius sits enthroned because in this speeded world even genius no longer has time to be worshipped. Gone too are the vast receptions where people tread oceans of red carpet. And the younger generation instead of staying discreetly within the garden walls has taken up *le sport* and imitates American speed and smokes American cigarettes and dances to American jazz. It flies along the straight roads of France in American motors because almost anything American is *chic* and *le sport* is King. The time of carriages is gone.

The book of Madame de Gramont is not, like many books of memoirs, a sigh of regret for something which is outmoded and gone. She is too much a citizen of the world to believe that nothing must change and she knows that a world without change would be a boring place indeed. She knows too, I think, that although the new is different it is no worse and quite possibly a little better than the old. For one thing the women of France are coming into their own.

In a hundred years, perhaps in five hundred years, this book will be among the footnotes to history, for it tells us many things that will not find themselves between the pages of formal text books. For one thing it will make the House of Rothschild live for us in a way the House of Fugger and the House of Medici can never live. They had no memoirist to tell us what sort of people they usually were. The book descends in a direct line from the Memoirs of Saint-Simon and the letters of Madame de Sevigné and the great memoir-novel of Proust. It will provide a mine of information for our descendants but in the meanwhile it provides a mine of entertainment for ourselves. This book is what memoirs should be.

LOUIS BROMFIELD

Paris,
February, 1929.

I

STARTING POINT

AT MADAME DE CAILLAVET'S AND IN THE group where Anatole France had his being and thought his thoughts the surprising diversity of the compartments in which most French people immure themselves first became clear to me.

The somewhat scandalized surprise which my presence and that of Monsieur de Clermont-Tonnerre caused among the frequenters of the salon in the Avenue Hoche dumbfounded me. What secret and sinister reasons could there be for a young couple to give up Polo, Puteaux and Race Courses for the Caillavet Sundays? Our present bazaar-life had not yet been invented at that remote date, and it was everyone's duty to stay in his clan.

I myself found it unnatural to think of seeing and hearing the author of *Le Lys Rouge, L'Étui de Nacre, La Rôtisserie de la Reine Pédauque* and

of *L'Orme du Mail.* Every table was strewn with France's books. It was all very well for people to say: "He speaks ill of religion, let us repudiate this scandalous writer,"—the number of his readers remained infinite. I thought him as abstract and remote as Buddha, Plato or Renan. There was a mythical being whom everybody talked about, whose books everybody read, but who really could not sit down in an armchair like everybody, lunch with his fellows, receive money from publishers, buy a hat, or sneeze behind a newspaper.

Yet one of my friends who was also an intimate of France's, Monsieur Émile Hovelaque, in his turn betrayed astonishment at my never having encountered the Master.

"You have never seen him?"

"No, never."

"And you go out every afternoon and evening?"

"We obviously do not go to the same places."

"Why, it is a nine days' wonder: you live ten minutes walk away and do not know him! I will see to this."

Émile Hovelaque had, in days gone-by, been very intimate with Madame de M. . . . He used

to go and play tennis in her garden at Neuilly; and at that time, Anatole France was also a friend of hers. Between games he used to have a chat with the Master and knew him well.

A Frenchwoman, however, required a pretext for being presented to the great man. A foreigner can easily make the tour of a country's curiosities; she is entitled to anything; her quality as a stranger serves as an introduction. Natives may become nuisances. A translation of Keats's Poems, which I had just published, supplied the desired link.

To effect the meeting, Émile Hovelaque invited me to his flat. I was the first to arrive, in a beautiful white frock, long and billowy, embroidered with spring flowers (it was June), and a large straw hat adorned with a thousand feathers of every colour of the rainbow. Impatiently I leaned over the balcony of the fourth floor. At last, in the narrow tortuous Rue Raynouard where Monsieur Hovelaque dwelt, I beheld a brougham, from which first of all there emerged a large brown felt hat, which performed evolutions and then was engulfed in the carriage, whence the person under the felt hat

drew a stout lady. They took a very long time to climb up the four stairs.

France was bland, amiable, charming and attentive. I can only recall vaguely what he said. I was too much troubled by his presence to pay attention to that. His chief topic was Joan of Arc.

"The Bishop of Dié has written to you about your *Jeanne d'Arc,* Monsieur," said Madame de Caillavet.

"The Bishop of Saint-Dié, Madame, I beg."

And, turning to us:

"In her zeal she is using the language of a Revolutionary Tribunal."

I was enchanted. France gave me a beautiful piece of verse, written in his own hand, dealing with Keats's *Grecian Urn.* As they got up, Madame de Caillavet said:

"Don't forget you are dining with a stout lady this evening."

I thought it was a playful way of reminding him that he was dining with herself. It was someone else.

She asked me to come and see her. When autumn came I did not fail to do so and got used to my new company pretty quickly. At first you had the impression of being in a railway station, with France, of course, for stationmaster. People walked about, came and went, formed thick groups round the Master, who selected a subject and never dropped it for the rest of the afternoon. No one could get the better of him at it, because this subject of his differed every time. One day it would be Racine's poetry, which he recited; another time André Chénier's. The following Sunday, by when I had my brain buzzing with Chénier's Eclogues, the matter in debate was Robespierre's speeches and the paradoxes of the French Revolution.

All around there was a running fire of talk, but no one dared to interrupt. Only the Master would break into a sentence of his own to say:

"How do you do, my dear Pierre Mille; how is Barnavaux? . . . Let me introduce you to one of our wildest socialists, Félicien Challaye."

He was a fat young man, fair, puffy and short-sighted. Or else:

"Ah! dear Yvonne Serruys! no one talks like her; I should like to talk like her! My writing may be pretty fair, but I am not so good at talking."

Another time he was absorbed in Rabelais. He was preparing an important study of the monk of Touraine and could not keep him out of his mind. Often interrupted during this monologue, I heard him repeat twenty times on end the Rabelaisian phrase:

"How! you can't keep for five years in your houses the children you have kept nine months in your belly?"

He turned to the right, he turned to the left, shook someone by the hand, was button-holed by Madame de Caillavet, who murmured something in his ear.

". . . children you have kept nine months in your belly . . ."

"Here's Briand, come and talk to Briand . . ."

". . . you have kept nine months . . ."

And Paul Boncour, still a young *avocat,* came close up to the Master.

Once however France did drop the subject.

"Ah! here we have the most beautiful lady in Paris."

And he stepped forward to meet a very long, very pale, very fair young woman, in chinchilla, with a cat's face and high cheek bones under triangular clear eyes.

"Madame Golubev," said he.

She modulated a phrase or two with a Russian accent. Madame de Golubev, who called to mind a tall convolvulus, always remained standing. France devoutly kissed her hands, but quickly left her in order to turn the pages of a large book he had fetched.

"In this volume her husband Victor de Golubev has assembled the loveliest drawings of Bellini."

And round the facsimiles of leaden or full-blooded faces, which represented the lovely youths of Florence and of Italy, bowed the skulls and black coats of the *bourgeois* of the Third Republic.

I looked on Anatole France as on a Methuselah, laden with the literature of all time, and I venerated him perhaps more than he would have cared for. In looking at beautiful forms in drawing,

painting and sculpture France probably experienced the most vivid joys of his life. He was an incomparable artist, but rather a bookish one. It was no good his saying: "You must never look at a picture with your ears, but with your eyes,"—for he adored everything about a picture too. In short, he loved artistic erudition.

On one occasion I was extremely uncomfortable at knowing so little of Giotto, as I was next to France at a lunch-party where he was the sole topic of conversation. Happily I had brought Gladys Deacon along with me, who could keep up her end, her long sojourns in Italy having initiated her into every mystery of the Paduan master. With her habitual impetuosity she contradicted France, who reposted with successful passes, so that everybody listened and watched enchanted.

I can still see France's repeated gesture of putting together the ten fingers of his raised hands,—marvellously intelligent hands, which seemed to be listening to him and to be made solely for collaborating in works of the spirit, since they were useless for everything else.

Are not France's books monologues, in which

the somewhat monotonous speech of the Master in the process of passing from pen to paper is metamorphosed into a masterpiece? France's language is not merely the dry brilliance of Voltaire and the robust gracefulness of the seventeenth century a trifle softened, but, amalgamating these diverse styles, attains to a perfection which makes him inimitable, since no one has been able to imitate him. Heedless of the trappings of obscurity, this language, engendered by the nimblest and subtlest mind that ever was, is wielded by an artist and a poet. Long or short, serpentine or abrupt, it sheds light on the facets of life seen by a humanist who hardly belongs to the nineteenth century, "that stupid nineteenth century," as Léon Daudet has rather happily dubbed it. Indeed, the brute elements of that century were in the ascendant when France appeared. Against Zola's Rougon-Macquarts and their inferior successors he sets Thaïs's smile, and I believe Thaïs's smile wins the day.

If a European "is formed by Greece, Rome and Christendom" (Paul Valéry), no one was more of a European than France, although he did not know

Europe. But he raised up again the French classical tradition just at the time when it was really beginning to sink in the mire.

As for Christianity, no fervent Christian has expended more time and pains on it than he. Love and hate come equally near to the heart of a subject. France's liturgical learning was infinite. He made me a present one day: the parchment leaves of an antiphonary. And indeed, the only music he allowed was plain song, or else that to which little girls hop about.

There is hardly a cloudy particle in his writing. With him learning and scepticism take the place of the romantics' religious self-tormenting, and a sensual libertinage, fed by painters and poets, of their *amour-passion.* In the strict sense, not a single heroine emerges from France's pages. Is it Thaïs, or Madame de Gromance, or Élodie, the print-seller's daughter? They pass through his books in order to represent beautiful and amatory ideas, also what the poets of bygone days used to call "the fleeting moments of pleasure." He makes them say charming things, but it is always himself talking. He prefers them when they have fine

arms and generous chests. Moreover, he liked women plump, a little soft perhaps, since he confesses to a predilection for the "feather-bed woman." At La Béchellerie he used to wake up in his directoire alcove between a nude by Prud'hon representing the celebrated Marguerite and an antique bust caressed by the rising sun. He gave way to rather a funny outburst at a lunch at Madame Pierre Mille's. He was tired, he said, of all those *gorges d'albâtre,* those alabaster bosoms which during the last forty years had invaded the front of clocks and books. I was looking over some very lovely engravings by Prud'hon with him and he drew my attention to the fact that those celebrated alabaster bosoms couldn't exist in nature.

Doesn't his hatred of generals proceed from his impotence to act? How could Anatole France understand the military performance of a Kitchener, who used to put his plans of campaign on little bits of paper which he scribbled in pencil and shoved under his helmet? And when at the time of the Dreyfus case a bitter and terrible struggle broke out between the generals, that is to say the military spirit, on the one side, and, on the other,

the civil institutions, with justice at their head, there is nothing surprising in France's siding with the civil institutions. The son of an old Republican of '48, he felt the sole approximately fighting instincts he possessed awakening within him.

This case, so clumsily managed, brought to grips two elements which were unaware of one another's existence and, springing ready armed from a comfortable void, skirmished passionately for years on end. Europe must have been calm and peaceful indeed for an incident produced by one individual to rouse public opinion to such an extent. At the same time, we must not forget that it was an opportunity for purging latent animosities. Anti-Semitism became a fashion which suited certain jealousies remarkably well.

I do not for a moment believe that France took Dreyfus's side because of Madame de Caillavet; Madame de Caillavet would, at a pinch, have become a Nationalist. Anatole France was obviously known and appreciated in Jewish circles, because these, being urban, can receive and flatter men of letters more easily than the landed reactionaries. The four great novels of *L'Histoire Contempo-*

raine show us the most interesting sides of a period which seems to us nowadays as stale as a novel about adultery. If Dreyfus had been sent to Africa like little boys who don't know how to behave, the Dreyfus case would never have been.

The young writers of today cherish a particular animosity against France. When I hear them expatiating quite freely on this subject, I can understand some of its motives. It is a form of Bolshevism, the hatred of the Have-Nots for the Haves. Oh, you young men who spit against the Arc de Triomphe!

In effect, France was master of a complete classical erudition. He liked the sedentary life, libraries, museums and books. The past envelops him, he turned to it at every step and refused to be cut off from it. He was the last heir, surviving to the opening of the twentieth century, of the leisured life which characterizes favoured ages, and the serenity of this Buddha gets on the young men's nerves. He had guiding principles and did not like people to depart from them.

Once at La Béchellerie he was looking at an art periodical. The number dealt exclusively with Pi-

casso, and he was charmed by him,—that is to say by his first manner as a draughtsman, simply because he could link up with Holbein. And why be angry with France, at that old man of eighty, because he did not understand the new aspects of a future not destined for him?

His indifference towards modern art was revealed to me one day when I had the honour of accompanying him to the Rouarts, the friends of Degas. The Rouarts, lovers of pictures, had plastered their house with them from top to bottom. All the money Monsieur Rouart made he invested in canvases which he bought every day in the week from the small dealers in the rue Victor-Massé, rue Fontaine and the rue Navarin:—in Manets, in Corots, in Gauguins. One day he brought home a Cézanne for five francs. They hung their pictures everywhere, in the ladies' lavatories, up the staircase, on the doors. In the end there was not an inch of free space. When the collection was put up for sale it fetched millions.

France climbed the stairs politely indifferent. His spectacles on the bridge of his nose, he cast a listless and joyless gaze at the canvases. Before a

Prospect of Tivoli, the finest Corot ever painted, he warmed up a little. When at last his eye fell on some pale Prud'hons, full of curving cupids and women in the Pompeian style, a thrill ran through him, and he began talking of Prud'hon and that blessed Revolutionary Age.

"Prud'hon is the André Chénier of painting," he said. "I want to write the life of Prud'hon."

He talked to us at length about Prud'hon, about his friend Constance Meyer, about his vicissitudes during the Revolution, and about his beautiful charcoal drawings of Marguerite, his favourite model. France had several drawings of Prud'hon both in Paris and at La Béchellerie. He never wrote that life of Prud'hon, but the documents collected for the biography produced *Les Dieux ont soif.*

At last, between the electric tones of a Degas and a portrait by Manet, France perceived a horrible little eighteenth century fan, an insipid pastoral scene painted in gouache.

"Ah," he exclaimed with a sigh of relief and satisfaction.

He could not love present-day painting any more than he could have made a financial success

of the Eiffel Tower or preferred a motor tour or an aeroplane race to looking at Roman ruins or Catalan manuscripts. The man who peers and ponders over folios in order to decipher texts belongs to a different species from him who sets out to discover gold fields or oil. In a word, France hadn't the least understanding for the brutal beauty of modern life.

A more serious complaint, perhaps the only one which some young people are justified in proffering against him is his attempt at hobbling their youth and surrounding their ardour by a scepticism overweighted with erudition. It may be, it is true even, that Anatole France had in him nothing of the leader of a crusade. But he was a great artist. And on the day when mankind can do without artists, it will perhaps do better, for its own honour, to blow up the planet.

Madame de Caillavet was energetic and kind. From devotion she tyrannized over the indolent Master and shut him up to compel him to write. French literature owes her great gratitude. She

was easy to get on with and our relations were most pleasant. I cannot recall Monsieur de Caillavet. Her son, the collaborator with Robert de Flers and the author of countless witty comedies, passed unnoticed in his mother's salon, since she sacrificed everything and everybody to her well-beloved Master. She did not even grant her son a moment or two by himself, as he had a right to claim—France was always by. Her daughter-in-law, a pretty blonde, appeared at some fancy dress ball or other crowned with the vines of a Bacchante, a Bacchante of the Parc Monceau however. She was simple and her husband wayward—for professional reasons. Once, after he had been ill, he was from home the whole of his first day out, and on his return, explained that he had spent it in the Bois de Boulogne.

"But, my dear, it has poured without interruption all day. What can you have been doing in the Bois in such weather?"

"Nothing; just sitting on a chair."

"How foolish of you!"

Full of zeal, Madame de Caillavet offered me her services. It was very nice of her, but what

could I ask for? To have Monsieur de Clermont-Tonnerre appointed Sub-Prefect at Barcelonette? The pleasure of meeting Anatole France at her house was enough and to spare. My moderation astonished her, and I understood why. The main *raison d'être* for the mob which used to surround her was Profit. Profitable, those meetings in which services are exchanged, profitable, those cabals in the smoking-room when politicians and journalists, their hands in their trouser-pockets, bartered jobs. Certain salons become a sort of exchange. Madame de Caillavet was a very industrious woman.

The attitude of Madame de Caillavet's friends threw light for me on the ingredients composing the society from which I myself came. That society asked for nothing, because it had nothing to give, possessing no personal influence in the country, since it no longer took part in its government. But it still had the prestige of its past, elegance, sport, and the Art of Enjoyment. For it enjoyment is almost a rite. This group is made up of big families and subsists by playing for rich alliances. Since it is divorced from the living

energies of the nation this society propagates not vertically but horizontally, attracting its equivalents in the other European countries and the two Americas. It has one code and fifty languages and swells and spreads like a crust round the other social classes.

And in order to savour more keenly the moments I enjoyed in the company of the distinguished people surrounding Madame de Caillavet, I used to set up by way of contrast to them other figures, as fascinating as they, which I had met long ago when I was a tiny girl. And those figures proceeded to file before me, bringing others with them. The personages I encountered at every stage of my life appeared again with such clarity that I resolved to make permanent their venerable or charming silhouettes and to enshrine them in these Mémoirs.

II

FAMILY PORTRAITS

I CAN RECALL THE DAY I SAW MY FATHER FOR THE first time. My grandmother Gramont, who brought me up, thought I ought to be sent on a visit to him; at that time he was stationed at Melun. Embarrassed by this little three-year-old girl, the young lieutenant took her for a walk in his vegetable garden and, for fun, violently shook a plum tree about her ears. Overwhelmed by such an avalanche of fruit, symbolical of the future storms which life had in store for me, I raised my stupent eyes right up the long madder-coloured legs and blue coat to my father's golden moustaches. He was too big for me; I thought him a bore and took no further interest in anything except his little basset bitch Valdine.

In those days I was living with my Gramont grandparents in the Rue La Pérouse. My grandmother spoilt me terribly, called me "the little

queen" and concerned herself about me all day. I used to listen to her playing melancholy Scotch airs on the piano, go for a drive with her and gorge myself with cakes in the afternoon. I rolled about on the great red carpets of the house and had two nurses to wait on me. My grandmother wished me to take a cold bath every morning. But as that didn't please me, I took a nice little warm bath prepared by the English governess, the French nurse filling up the bath tub with cold water again just as my grandmother came in to feel the water. To try to teach me to read would have been an offence of *lèse-majesté,* and I disdained so vile an occupation.

Two portraits hung in my room. One represented God the Father with beard and halo, for whom I had no love: for every time some little mishap befell me, someone would tell me pointing at the picture: "It is a punishment sent you by *le bon Dieu!*" The other was a portrait of my mother. Graceful and pure, she looked like a Gothic Virgin. She had died in giving birth to me, and, if I call up the stranger who for all that is my mother, it is to see her on her knees in the

Church of Notre Dame des Victoires, her brown face warmly lit up by the flaming candles. She used to go every evening for prayers to that Chapel of Light. Her gentleness and angelic piety were a better preparation for an untimely death than for the rude struggles of life.

I hardly ever saw my grandfather. All I can recall is the skirts of a long flowing frock-coat and a majestic, small head, disdainfully crossing my ocean of red carpet and disappearing through a door. His last years must have been terrible and were the price he paid for the uninterrupted success of his life.

My grandfather had naturally been brought up near the cradle of the Comte de Chambord. Subsequently he became the friend of Louis Philippe's sons. In the end he turned a partisan of Napoleon, the young Emperor of the French. The Faubourg Saint Germain withheld its daughters from such a weathercock, and he had to look for a wife in the mists of Scotland. He brought back Emma MacKinnon, who had money enough to support

an ambassador's establishment. Strong and hardy like all her race, she never took to her bed except to bring forth children and to die.

She had four children: Agénor (my father); Corisandre de Brigode; Armand, Duc de Lesparre; and Alfred, Comte de Gramont.

My grandfather Gramont, a brilliant product of the École Polytechnique, left it with a commission in the artillery which he threw up in 1842. Six years later he took up arms again during the famous June days of 1848. As a lieutenant in the first Legion of the new National Guard he helped defend Paris against the insurgents. Fighting took place round about Notre-Dame and the streets near by. My grandfather broke through the barricade at the Petit Pont, but the company he commanded soon found itself surrounded between the Pont de l'Archévêché and the Pont Royal. His lines of communication having been cut, Lieutenant de Gramont made his way to the Tuileries by skirting along the dangerous Seine embankments. Help was dispatched. The Quai Montebello and the Rue Saint-Jacques were cleared and peace outwardly re-established. But, fearing shooting

from the windows, my grandfather had the houses of that quarter, haunts of the insurgents, searched by his men. Firing broke out from the top floor of a house in the rue Galande. The rebels, black with powder and with bloodshot eyes, were compelled to surrender. There was a woman amongst them. The lieutenant notes in his Memoirs that some of the ringleaders who most violently incited the people to revolt afterwards, from cowardice, went over to the other camp. He shewed up several of them and sent them to where they came from.

After the Sunday concerts at the Châtelet it has very often happened that I ordered the carriage to wait in the Rue des Lavandières-Sainte-Opportune in order to avoid the crush, and it was in that very street that my grandfather, pursued by insurgents with pistols, was saved by a charitable inhabitant, who humanely opened the street door of his house to him.

In consequence of this gallant conduct my grandfather's name was sent up for the cross of the Legion of Honour, an honour which in those days meant something. But Colonel Charras, whose revolutionary sentiments he did not share, struck

him out of the list. In December 1850, however, the Duc and Duchesse de Gramont were dining with the Prince and Princesse de la Cisterna, who lived in the Hotel Talleyrand, the same which now belongs to Baron Édouard de Rothschild; my grandfather was summoned to the Tuileries and went off immediately. The Prince-Président stepped forward to greet him, intent on repairing personally Colonel Charras' injustice, pinned the cross on his chest and gave him the accolade. It was a mark of sympathy followed by very many others. Did not Louis Napoleon seek to do the nephew the good offices in return for those done him by the uncle, Alfred d'Orsay?

In 1852 the Prince-Président became Emperor of the French and continued to take an interest in the young Duc de Gramont's fortunes. He was shortly entrusted with the diplomatic representation of his country in different places and was successively French envoy at Cassel, at Stuttgart and finally at Turin.

For five years he stayed in Piédmont, was assiduous in his attendance on Cavour and acquired so perfect a familiarity with the political intrigues

and ambitions of Italy that the Emperor very naturally appointed him his ambassador at the Holy See in 1857, during the most troublous and difficult period of Italian history. *"Molto confuso, molto confuso."* At that time France set the pace, and the eyes of Europe were fixed upon her.

Nowadays we look upon the Italian peninsula and find it perfectly natural to say: Italy, capital Rome. At Rome there is the Quirinal and there is the Vatican, in which the spiritual power of the Pope is confined. In 1926 there is the great new power Mussolini—but what labour and toil were required to make possible so simple a proposition! Italy in 1860 gave Europe as much to think about as Europe does the League of Nations in 1925. A Pope, Pius IX, worthy but obstinate and hidebound, crying out like an osprey when his states were attacked and backed by the machiavellism of astute prelates, of Cardinal Antonelli in particular; the Austrians in command at Florence, at Parma, at Lucca and in Venetia, where they built up the famous Austrian quadrilateral; the Bourbons installed in Naples, whence they reigned over the Two Sicilies; Victor Emmanuel, King of Sar-

dinia, desirous of exploiting for his own ends the liberal and patriotic sentiments of his people and becoming the centre of a united Italy, with no assistance but a small army, a fever-ridden island, a rustic Savoy more French than Italian, and Piédmont, but possessed of will, of energy, of incomparable duplicity, of a total lack of scruple and of a great minister; a people always ready to rebel of their own accord and start agitations of an extreme nature; incompatible interests masked by great principles which were paraded on all occasions:—such were the broad outlines of the situation in Italy when the Duc de Gramont took up his office in Rome.

The Italian patriots, in emulation of Mazzini and Garibaldi, were raising armies, rousing the people, busy on all sides. The Emperor himself was playing a double game. Was he committed by secret pledges? At Plombières he had certainly promised Cavour material aid in return for the cession of Nice and Savoy. But the Emperor of the French could not, beyond a certain point, meddle with papal concerns; for all the Roman Catholics of Europe and of France would league themselves

against the intruder who ignored the French tradition. "The Catholic question is the only one which embarrasses us in any design to recognize the Kingdom of Italy," the Duc de Gramont in fact wrote to Monsieur Thouvenel, the Minister for Foreign Affairs. Accordingly, the Emperor gives official orders to the latter, who communicates them to the Duc, to the end of entangling the Pope, the Vatican and Cardinal Antonelli in respectful promises. He compromises, makes concessions, pushes forward an army, then withdraws it, and, with all his civility he has but one aspiration, which is not only *not* to thwart, but to abet the King of Sardinia's armies in their zealous attempt to achieve national unity in the face of the obstacle raised by the Temporal Power.

At this Penelope's web the Duc de Gramont toiled diplomatically and skilfully. Though in favour of a diminished and enfeebled Papal State, he realized that Italian unity would not be advantageous to France. "We no longer scatter dissension among the frontier states, but rather seek to increase their strength and, in the attempt, we bring down on our heads the hostility of Austria

and of the legitimists, eager to use the pretext of outrage upon the papacy for stirring up public opinion against the Emperor." Moreover, the Duc de Gramont was compelled to defend himself in Rome itself against the intrigues of General Goyon whose injurious acts went beyond the Imperial wishes and the hints of the Quai d'Orsay and enhanced the difficulties of the situation by producing a state of conflict between the Italian republicans and the Pope's catholic army, made up of foreign elements under their command. "The mystics are in a ferment and wish to harm the Emperor, whom they loathe. He is more of an Italian than a Frenchman" was their cry. The Roman families were divided into two camps, the Whites and the Blacks, the Salviatis and the Borgheses against the Piombinos and the Colonnas.

Secretly Napoleon III supported the Italian republicans against the Pope. The latter thought that the ambassador "was a devil, the worthy representative of a sovereign even more diabolical than himself."

England, under the leadership of old Lord Pal-

merston, wanted Italian unity. She had to bow to a vote of the provinces left free to choose between France and Sardinia. The poll took place in 1860 and, contrary to general hopes, the provinces returned to France.

Napoleon had forced the Austrians to evacuate Lombardy.

"The Pope's spiritual power is absolutely unfettered," said Monsieur Thouvenel.

The struggle had been so acute and so painful, at every stage those diplomatic tasks, of which today we merely see the outcome, had been baffled by so many circumstances of different sorts, that, in spite of the successful issue of his labours, the Duc de Gramont was delighted to leave Rome. In recompense for his eminent services the Emperor, in 1861, appointed him ambassador at Vienna.

His had been a magnificent diplomatic achievement, since diplomacy consists in obtaining the desired ends without dangerous friction. He had intervened to allow Admiral Le Barbier de Tinan to proceed to Gaëta roads, not that the unhappy and embarrassing Francis II might be saved, but that this last of the Naples Bourbons might be

helped to leave his states in dignity and be granted "the honour of defending himself." The Duc de Gramont endeavoured to purchase the freehold of the palaces commonly known as the Farnese Estates, which Napoleon wanted to acquire, but he could not get it. On the hand he carried through the purchase of the Museo Campana for 4,300,000 francs, and thereby endowed the Louvre with many masterpieces.

My grandmother was particularly fond of the Villa Falconieri at Frascati and also of the yacht on which she used to go for sails off Porto d'Anzio, to the great despair of her children, who nearly all suffered from sea-sickness. In addition, she had a habit of leading the whole embassy off into mad gallops across the Campania. One night mutineers came and threatened the Villa. Armed with a revolver she kept courageous watch.

Her love of horses attracted to her the fellow-feeling of Elizabeth of Austria, who valued people principally for their horsemanship. My grandmother used to gallop in the Prater and jump

obstacles. I can say truthfully that the two best horsewomen in Vienna were she and the Empress. Elizabeth of Austria preferred her place at Gôdôllô to the capital. There she could escape from the Emperor and his court and live surrounded by horses, greyhounds and Magyar nobles of her choice. For a long time Esterhazy was her favourite.

How seductive she must have been, the Empress, when she went galloping along the avenues of Gôdôllô, her celebrated figure set off by her closely fitting habit and her top hat gleaming like her hair! Her features were not very regular; they inclined to the Kalmuk type.

On her mantel-piece my grandmother always had the photographs of Elizabeth of Austria, crowned with a diadem of plaits, and of Ludwig II of Bavaria. These two figures amazed my childish imagination and, on the groundfloor of the Rue Bassano, in which my grandmother lived after becoming a widow, opened the floodgates of the Wittelsbach epic and the history of a Germanic Empire, fabulous legends for a little girl just able to trot about Carnot's Paris.

My grandfather had no love either of horses or of fields. Extremely handsome, haughty with men and delightful with women, he was an accomplished ambassador, courteous, majestic and cultured. He would tolerate no rivalry in the matter of ladies, and had all those for whom he had a mind. In his first youth, while still at the École Polytechnique, he knew Rachel—which gave him his taste for literature.

Only once did my father speak to me of his father, who must have experienced over his eldest son Agénor the vexation some men feel at seeing a successor very different from themselves growing up at their side with unnecessary rapidity. My father was a handsome young man, tall and fair. Walking with him in the Prater, my grandfather observed without pleasure that the glances of the female promenaders inclined to his junior. So he proceeded to obliterate him behind an enormous yellow parcel. The poor young man, who had not yet outgrown his respect and timidity, dared not kick at this, but he did not forget the incident.

When still a child my father committed the imprudence of saying to some little Italian Princes

with whom he was taking a country walk: "I hear you eat nothing but cabbage." This allusion to the poverty of certain old Roman families nearly provided a "diplomatic incident."

The authorities at Vienna set a high value on France and her ambassador and paid attention to what they said. Posted by the Duc de Gramont's reports on the internal situation, Napoleon III made it clear to Prince Metternich that France had no interest in thwarting Austria on her frontiers, that she desired to support her, but that it was incumbent on her and that he besought her to win the sympathy of the neighbouring populations, generally in a state of famine. Expressing surprise that the privilege of administering daily relief in doles of corn and maize was reserved for the Russian consul, he sent a sum of 60,000 francs to the starving Montenegrins.

The Roman difficulties were not yet at an end, and the Minister for Foreign Affairs declared that he would lose his wits and his health over them. To encourage him in standing firm, the Duc de Gramont wrote to him: "The mass of Italians will resign themselves with astonishing docility. I have

lived in that country for nine years. I know the real Italy and the real Italians. I know the true sentiments and habits of those passive, sensitive beings, who, like subtle echoes, repeat and exaggerate every note you make them utter, provided always you use the tone of authority in dealing with them." The Italy of today has experienced a magnificent rebirth.

Italy was in everyone's mind: so was the Archduke Maximilian's expedition to Mexico. The distant United States themselves came upon the scene with their War of Secession. And all this time Europe ignored the fact that the dragon Faffner had laid a big egg which would shortly hatch out in the sinister swamps of Prussia. Its growth was favoured by two events entailing most important moral consequences: the Bonapartist incident, which broke up the old French legitimist tradition and substituted the Right of Might for the Right of Nations, and the King of Sardinia's annexations. Prussia inculcated in Germany the annexational principles originated in Piédmont and, without drawing its sword, took advantage of revolutionary movements to annex the smaller

German states. The Cabinets of Paris and St. Petersburg endeavoured to negotiate exchanges with Prussia. The latter was to cede its Rhine territories to France and receive Holstein, Slesvig and the Hanseatic Towns in compensation. But the King of Prussia, regarding any alliance with the Napoleons as an insult to his father and mother, rejected every overture.

Herr von Bismarck succeeded the Count von Pourtalès, recently dead, as Prussian envoy in Paris. Full of imagination, as they believed, Bismarck rather troubled the other diplomatists. His brutal, new-fashioned methods produced amazement and distaste at Vienna. "One cannot tell what he is aiming at."

The Duc de Gramont reported to Monsieur Thouvenel the disturbing judgment passed on Bismarck by Herr von Rechberg, the Austrian Minister for Foreign Affairs: "If Monsieur de Bismarck," he said to me, "had had a complete diplomatic training, he would be one of the first German statesmen, if not the first; he has courage, firmness, vision and much ardour, but he is incapable of sacrificing a preconceived idea, a prej-

udice or an idea which he has espoused, to any reason of a higher order whatever; he is not a practical politician, he is a party man in the full sense of the term and, since he exercises charm and influence in politics and, besides, is hostile to us, we cannot look upon this choice without displeasure and uneasiness."

The fact is that Bismarck was making straight for his goal, according to a settled plan, and would not waste his time with the mealy-mouthed despatches in which petty cares and kindly solicitude get perpetually tangled up with the advance of History. These minor considerations weighed heavily on the diplomatic correspondence of those days, and the style itself drooped beneath its excess of courtesies and those phrases which mean so many different things. Its sole purpose was reassurance: "Such-and-such a rumour is unfounded . . . I dropped him a hint about it . . . My impression is most satisfactory . . . I have thought it my duty to inform you . . . He sees no objection . . . I do not, I hope, flatter myself . . . My dispatch can only reproduce very faintly . . ."

The style of Monsieur de Norpois in Marcel

Proust affords a delicious example of that phraseology which must have been so difficult to employ.

The Third Republic embellishes the language of diplomacy in a different way. When Viviani accompanied Marshal Joffre to America he boldly declared: "Si le maréchal ouvre la gueule, je fous le camp!"

Napoleon III had no proper line of action marked out by a traditional policy. Everlastingly obliged to shew the greatest consideration for those who treated him as an upstart, he allowed himself to be pulled hither and thither in a perpetual vacillation. With no suspicion of Prussia's strength he was swindled by Bismarck into permitting her to declare war on Austria and wavered at the moment when a threat on the Rhine might have proved effective: so in 1866 Sadowa took Europe by surprise.

In order to concentrate better, Austria handed Venetia over to Napoleon. Though now the great arbiter of the destinies of Central Europe he still hesitated. The disastrous Mexican business had

reduced the forces at his disposal; Napoleon, lacking means and decision, put no obstacle whatever in the way of Bismarck's progressive operations. Her army had, at that moment, made Prussia mistress of the situation, and she dictated her terms; all Germany passed under her domination. The illusory secret negotiations which the Emperor of France had carried on with Bismarck, demanding the cession of Belgium and Luxembourg, in return for his hesitation, were divulged with the intention of turning his neighbours against him. And a sardonic England did nothing to exorcise the disaster on the Continent which her clever diplomacy foresaw with perfect clearness.

The Duc de Gramont was appointed Minister for Foreign Affairs in 1870.

The occult power of destiny ordained that Napoleon III, in bestowing upon him this mark of confidence and sympathy, should be the instrument of his downfall. If the Duc de Gramont had been appointed ambassador at London he would not have been made the scapegoat for the war of 1870.

That famous war of 1870, conceived by Bis-

marck, had been prepared for a dozen years with masterly adroitness. To wrestle with Bismarck another Bismarck would have been required: there was but one in Europe.

It is an unexplained phenomenon that nations, like individuals, have scales before their eyes when they should be watching what is springing up by their side and will presently stifle them. A father does not notice his son growing up, an ironmaster never shews sufficient concern about the neighbouring blast-furnaces, a state or a continent or a race refuses to acknowledge the omnipotence of another state, another continent, another race. The French have the sad habit of laughing at their neighbours. They did not believe in the possible greatness of Germany and they even despised the rude Pomeranians. Has not the supremacy of the Americas taken old Europe somewhat by surprise, and will not the golden races of Asia soon deal with us as equals? In the time of Napoleon III France, intoxicated by its first successes, could not imagine that the war would be anything but a triumphal march on Berlin, led by beautiful comic-opera generals with their *képis* over one ear. The

same reckless refrain: "They wouldn't dare!" runs through the whole of French history.

For this reason the Duc de Gramont, the expression of his Emperor, his government and his country, had the melancholy part of personifying the French frivolity which neglected to keep itself posted and remained in complete ignorance of Prussia.

On the 15th of July 1870 he read the Declaration of War from the Tribune of the Chamber and remained in Paris. Smart Society was at Deauville. The return from the races one of those days was lacking in gaiety. The phrase: "We have been beaten" went round amid general stupefaction. The wretched but brave French army, mainly under the command of officers from Africa, could not fight against the scientific organization of the German army. On the 2nd of September 1870, there was neither Empire nor Emperor more.

That grotesque, puerile epoch, by dint of its foolery, succeeded in breaking our fine tradition in literature and taste. How just is that profound phrase of Lamartine's, which he uttered before the ashes of Napoleon I when they were brought to

France: "À Napoléon, *seul!*" It was in 1857 that Baudelaire and Flaubert were sentenced for the immorality of their writings and in 1862 that Ernest Renan's lectures at the Collège de France were stopped by imperial decree.

My father, as a schoolboy, found himself in a carriage close to the Empress and Princess Metternich; he prepared himself to hear immortal words. Greatly was he disconcerted on hearing these ladies debating the most becoming fashion of wearing their hats.

A whole generation was put out of action by the knockout blow of Sedan. Bismarck's murder-campaign was complete.

I have known old beaux of the Second Empire who never got over the loss of their quadrilles. They have filled me with horror for that age. Yet the passing of waltzes and crinolines haloes those far-off days with the glamour of a fairy story. The nostalgic reminiscence of it is distilled in Ravel's fine waltz, even better to my way of thinking than in Offenbach's music. I could listen to

that waltz of Ravel's played thirty times running. Through the half-open windows of vanished palaces float snatches of the phantom waltz; the farandole gyrates beneath the lustres of Saint-Cloud, Compiègne and the Tuileries; crinolines revolve round enormous satin *poufs* on which high officers display themselves. So intoxicating is the waltz that it whirls fate itself away with it. But suddenly it becomes fluid and transparent; the music fades away, the cadence slows down, and the waltz dies on the burning hill of Saint-Cloud; the Paris of the Commune flames against the horizon.

At the fall of the Empire the Duc de Gramont bought a house in an unfrequented quarter of Paris, in the Rue La Pérouse. There he lived until 1880 in perfect retirement, three-quarters ruined, having spent his wife's fortune in order to maintain the splendour of his embassies. That beautiful tradition of ruining oneself in office has, I think, perished. Nowadays, office must be remunerative.

This grandfather of mine was the great-grandson of Martine de Polastron, Duchesse de Polignac

(the friend of Marie-Antoinette), and the son of Ida d'Orsay, Alfred d'Orsay's sister. His father had met and married that beautiful creature in England during the years of the Emigration. Ida d'Orsay was descended from those Grimaud d'Orsays of mixed and ardent blood, whose family tree is entangled with the Crawford ladies of England. Éléonore de Franquement of Germany and stout young fellows from Franche-Comté.

My great-grandmother was beautiful and couldn't bear not to be told so. I saw her in her extreme old age. She looked like a pyramid. Her little face was framed by hair braided into a knot and dotted with pearls, a mass of ribbons on top; the folds of her great silk gown falling about her chair made a majestic creature of her. Wealth and her destiny were strangers, but the families of Émigrés returning to France were not hard to please, and the Restoration encouraged simple living. She was fêted and greatly admired. On her husband reproaching her, perhaps a little harshly, for the number of her admirers she threw herself into a pond. The voluminous puffs of her garnet-red velvet dress kept her above water. She was

fished out again and thereafter left in peace. Balzac, Disraeli, Eugène Sue were among her eminent admirers. What a pity that their correspondence with my great-grandmother was burnt by the unseasonable zeal of her daughter, the pious Léontine, who refused to marry in order never to leave her.

At Chambourcy, just outside the gates of Saint-Germain, they had a modest house where they spent the summers. The place was impregnated with memories of Alfred d'Orsay, the celebrated Dandy.

Alfred d'Orsay, brought up in England, only left under the pressure of events the island which had shown itself so kind and hospitable to the French Émigrés. London was his true home. He had realized it by instinct, and it was in Hyde Park that, at the age of twenty, this new Apollo had brought down his chariot. For thirty years he took part in a triumphal procession by the side of Lady Blessington. When between them they had squandered Lord Blessington's fortune of

£750,000 and could only go out by night to avoid their creditors, they fled to Paris, then took refuge at Chambourcy with my great-grandmother, who afforded them an asylum during their lifetime and even after their death. At the bottom of the garden rises a pyramid under which the remains of Alfred d'Orsay and Lady Blessington repose. These two beings existed in order to show the world in dinners, balls and festivities the intoxicating splendour of their beauty and their finery.

Chambourcy passed to my grandfather's sister Léontine, called "Tante Titine." I went over to see her. The ugly, devout old maid, with yellow teeth for everyone to see, led a humble life, filled with catechistical and pharmaceutical occupations to atone for her kinsfolk's insolent splendour. On her daily errand to the village church she was compelled, contritely and with bowed head, to pass by that proud pyramid which covered the ashes of a guilty love, and she could not move a step at Chambourcy without encountering the traces of a way of life she condemned. A long glass gallery had part of one wall filled with Lady Blessington's literary works. Every year *la belle Irlandaise*

turned out almanacs, an insipid novel or so and her Travels in France and Italy. Ranged in rows on neat shelves stood the volumes in which she retailed—somewhat conventionally, alas—the conversations she had had with Lord Byron two years before his departure for Greece, whither he was going in the secret hope of being crowned king, and those in which her Ladyship published the brilliant souvenirs of her Odyssey in the company of her marvellous lover.

In a caravan of barouches and mounted postilions, followed by wagons containing Lord Blessington, French cooks and the luggage, the pair stop at Genoa to visit Lord Byron, drop down to Rome, rent a palace, the Palazzo Negroni, with furniture complete. They proceed to Naples, take up their quarters in the Palazzo Belvedere, a lovely villa of the Vomero, surrounded by Shakespearian gardens and overlooking the sea; they sail by moonlight in the bay aboard the "Bolivar" a yacht bought from Lord Byron. And every evening the palaces at Rome or at Naples are crowded with a noble throng, eating, dancing and talking to the sound of violins.

After six or seven years of this Italian life the trio, a little tired of enchantment and azure, settled at Paris in the same extravagant style, in a mansion on the banks of the Seine pulled down when the Rue Solférino was cut through. Lord Blessington ordered furniture as sumptuous as it was bad in taste, and her Ladyship, thrilled by the white and sky-blue satin alcove for her quasi-royal bed, which rested on the wings of two silver swans, expressed herself in these terms: "The effect of the whole is chastely beautiful."

At that time, when his debts were most notorious, d'Orsay turned his talents as a sculptor to some account. It became *de bon ton* to sit for him. Every corner at Chambourcy contained a bust by him, and his pencil drawings covered the walls. The bust of Wellington stood side by side with that of Louis Napoléon, Lady Blessington faced d'Orsay.

One of his best drawings eternalizes the happy hour of an afternoon at South Kensington. Lady Blessington is chatting with the Duke of Welling-

ton, the English painter Landseer is sketching. The Comte d'Orsay is represented as accompanied by two dogs and talking to the Earl of Chesterfield; young girls, striking attitudes then fashionable, are reading out of books, and Lord Brougham has taken a seat beneath one of those immense trees which are the pride of English parks.

At that time d'Orsay was the glass of English fashion. When Louis Napoléon wandered lonely about London, the generous d'Orsay alone showed any interest in him. His magnificent hospitality and firm friendship were of great moral and material help to the exiled Prince, especially when d'Orsay interceded with Monsieur de Saint-Aulaire for him to be left in peace, despite all the designs of Louis-Philippe. So the Prince became an intimate friend at Gore House. When he became President he gave but one paltry dinner to d'Orsay and Lady Blessington at the Élysée. English travellers passing through were the other guests. In this way he expressed his disdain for celebrities in their fall and exile.

Superior to the Dandy Brummel, the Dandy d'Orsay applied his dandyism to winning artists

and poets and keeping them attached to him. Thackeray was a frequent visitor at Gore House, so was Charles Dickens: the latter had a great affection for d'Orsay, which never ceased, and Thomas Moore, the Irish poet, loved to sing for them. I say "them," for Lady Blessington and d'Orsay were as united in life as they now are under the pyramid at Chambourcy.

Nevertheless, a place of honour at Chambourcy was reserved for the bust of Lamartine, a capital production in which d'Orsay, fired by the great poet, showed real inspiration. The two men understood one another. They had points in common: physical beauty, for instance, which lent itself to rather theatrical attitudes in parliament or Lady Blessington's drawing-room, as the case might be, love of pomp and travel; they were among the first to experience the intoxication of Italy.

D'Orsay, that King of Dandies, knew how to bow before the Kings of Poetry whom he met: before Byron, Vigny, Lamartine.

The latter's bust was made in Paris, in a studio which d'Orsay had fitted up in a special way,

though in no "style" properly speaking—in which, however, you could equally well sleep on a divan, work and hold receptions. It was the front hall, what we now call the "living room."

The poet, as utterly ruined as the dandy, could not come to his aid, but that bust of him caused something of a stir and, braving public opinion, the Prince-Président, appointed his old friend Directeur des Beaux-Arts. D'Orsay did not stand long in the way of those who coveted his post: for he died during the summer of 1852. Poor Lady Blessington had well and truly committed suicide three years before.

In the *Constitutionnel* for June 1855, Lamartine wrote some fine lines on d'Orsay, which I will quote since they have never appeared except in that periodical:—

> The world does not know what it has lost in the Comte d'Orsay, the brother-in-law of the Duke de Gramont. He was known merely for his looks,—hereditary in his family,—for his adventures, his beauty and his celebrated extravagances which would have been excused in another and which only became

notorious because he himself was by nature conspicuous. Woe to them who shine! their faults partake, so to speak, of the splendour of their nature. Monsieur de Chateaubriand, who speaks of the handsome Comte d'Orsay in his Memoirs, is harsh where he should have been compassionate towards the promptings of youth and passion. Dante himself does not speak with such harshness of the errors of love: when Francesca de Rimini has spoken, Dante does not condemn, he does not excuse, he does not absolve; he melts, he pities and laments. One tear would be enough to drop for d'Orsay's youth. But he emerged from that youth a man, and the man possessed true talents and sterling qualities.

Such natural qualities, we know, are less valued than the virtues because they cost no effort; they are certainly less meritorious, but we are not certain that they are not more amiable. Nature is always more graceful than effort. In d'Orsay everything was nature, and that nature, momentarily over-weighted by excess of vigour, rose up again in strength against the blasts of misfortune and time. But a short while ago France would have cherished in him a prodigal son of its true genius. May those who never knew the Comte d'Orsay judge him without indulgence or justice, but his friends (and we were of their number) shall discern in his person an example of nature's richest profusion. The very errors and repentances of his youth formed in some sort and in some part the perfection of his maturity. On his expression they imprinted, while yet

young, that melancholy which is the shadow of our memories spreading over our countenances as the sun of our life sinks towards the west, they endowed his spirit with that intelligent and merciful tolerance which a man can the better accord to others when aforetime he has felt for himself its balm and its necessity. They preserved in him that openness of heart which zealously overflowed in affection, forgiveness, help, pity and active charity. As for his spirit, which his passionate admiration for the arts elevated and rendered creative, it was the limpid, but warm reflection upon a polished and luminous surface of all the moral and material beauties to be found in nature and society. To him, Beauty was Virtue. He loved it in heroism, as he loved it in form: all ugliness vanished from the earth when he spoke. Death itself cannot conquer the optimism of that intelligence, the glory of that man.

When during his last and only illness (an illness of the heart) we went to visit him in his scupltor's studio, that little museum turned sickroom, where the patient might die before the objects of his worship; when stretched upon his couch amidst his pictures, his marbles, his drawings and his rough-hewn busts, he looked like a bowed statue of Antinous losing its colour, but not its beauty in the rays of the sun just setting over the marble, we could not weary of contemplating with unmitigated tenderness the serenity and, so to speak, the splendour of the dying man. He never referred to himself, he only thought of those who loved him, in order to spare them untimely grief.

He would have stifled his last breath in order to stifle a pang in his friends, his sister, his nieces, who would ever mourn him. The rigorists, that implacable sect, may trample upon that coffin and that frail memory; the rigorists are in the right before transgression, they are wrong after. The only unpardonable thing we know is never to have pardoned.

But we, let us pay just tribute to one of the men who in our age possessed in the supreme degree the social virtue of charm, and if we should be too austere to pay that tribute, let us grant forgiveness and if we are too withered to grant forgiveness, let us bestow the charity of a tear on a good heart.

A good heart! What God or what man can ever condemn the dead who for funeral epitaph has the two words "Grace" and "Goodness"—the one the greatest gift of nature, the other the greatest gift of God?

D'Orsay had bequeathed all his possessions to his sister. That was the reason why he caracoled in effigy upon the walls of Chambourcy. The engravings of him are well known, but what is perhaps not known is the fact that he definitely established the male fashion of black or dark cloth, set off by white linen. Since the powder and velvet of the *ancien régime* male fashion was feeling its

way. Some Englishman or other dressed in bottle-green from head to foot. D'Orsay it was whose taste ordered this matter, which is of such great importance in Great Britain.

If d'Orsay had a passion for the arts, he had inherited it. His grandfather had adorned the d'Orsay estate, near Paris, with splendid statues and vases. His collection was seized by the State during the Revolution and broken up between the public gardens of the Tuileries, the Luxembourg and Saint-Cloud. It still exists, and we pass by it as we take our walks abroad.

My father, an excellent mathematician, passed out of Saint-Cyr top of his year. He fought in the campaign of 1870 as second lieutenant in the 4th Hussars, aged nineteen. In 1914 he would often speak of the town of Bapaume when it was taken and re-taken by the Germans and which he had helped to defend forty-four years before.

After '70, my father, a modest lieutenant had only sixty francs a month and his pay. He suffered under the relative poverty of his family and

the hostility which surrounded them. He got no invitations and used to tell us: "There was nowhere I could go to in September for shooting rabbits." So heavily did resentment caused by the defeat of '70 weigh on the Gramont family that his uncle, General de Lesparre, refused to put him up for the Jockey Club. But his marvellous figure and effulgent health compensated for the buffets of fate and, a few years later, helped him to the conquest of a young heiress, Isabelle de Beauvau, who preferred a husband with looks to the extremely rich and extremely ugly Comte Gramont d'Aster.—I do not complain of my mother's choice.

"Agénor's a *gaffeur* but he does not run into debt," said my grandfather in introducing his son to the Prince Marc de Beauvau.

A widower at the end of one year, my father made a very transitory stay in the Faubourg Saint-Germain. His father-in-law, however, still used to have him down to his place at Sainte-Assise, and he used often to stay there for the hunting. In those days Seine-et-Marne was a fashionable *département*. On the one side there was

Bois-Boudran belonging to the Comte Greffulhe, whose shoots were unique; on the other Vaux-le-Vicomte, the Sommiers' property. The château of Courances, with its running water all round, belonged to Madame de Béhague, the daughter of the Viennese banker Haber. Ferrières, Baron Alphonse de Rothschild's place, was at the edge of the *département;* so Sainte-Assise, though simple, breathed profusion.

The smell of the money all about began accordingly to sharpen my father's healthy appetite. Memories of '70 had grown dim, the young Duc de Guiche was sought after; he had a small fortune, —my mother's dowry. Dancing at Baron Alphonse de Rothschild's he conquered without difficulty the simple heart of Marguerite de Rothschild, the pretty daughter of Baron Charles of Frankfort.

Blessed with seven daughters, three of whom married their cousins, the Baronne Charles had made up her mind that her two youngest, Marguerite and Berthe, should marry Frenchmen. What Woman wills, God wills, even the God of Israel. And Agénor, defying the lightnings of the Faubourg Saint-Germain (which he hardly knew),

and Marguerite, defying the wrath of her father (who disowned her), married.

There followed the traditional honeymoon in Italy, the most interesting souvenir of which was a large photograph album of the Naples museum. Twice daily for years, before lunch and before dinner, I turned over the pages of that album, which gave me a love of beautiful forms, of sculpture and of Greek mythology. I knew by heart the torsos, thighs and buttocks of the Olympian deities.

My father and his young wife never returned to Italy. "Ah, when we saw the snow at Mâcon, what a deep breath we fetched!"

After the birth of my brother Armand, my father wanted me with him. I understood vaguely that a misfortune had overtaken me, when my grandmother Gramont, a little chilly in her grief, put me into a noisy station bus with my French nurse at my side and a trunk over my head. It was an unpleasant change for me from the upholstered brougham to which I was accustomed. Farewell, my kingdom of the Rue La Pérouse!

Behold me dispatched to Melun, to an ugly, sad little garrison town. Gone is my English governess, gone my red carpet, gone my right to command! Indeed, I had to obey, and to obey strangers. How I missed the silken rustle of my grandmother's dress, the Scotch airs she played and her dreamy eyes!

To console myself, I cried all day long. I cried when I was with my parents, I poured out torrents of tears which wetted my tuckers, I listened to myself crying, and accustomed myself to the rising and falling wails which I uttered.

When spring came—my first country spring—a garden planted with big trees and shady paths comforted me. I forgot my little past.

There was an iron gate at the bottom of the garden with a yellow road passing in front of it. The bustle on that road attracted me, and I used sometimes to challenge children going past and make them come into the garden. I made many little friends. And that was my childhood with its games and the world seen from floor level: grasses and daisies, insects and snails, spiders' webs in the

trees and, also, innumerable horses' legs passing before my eyes, since my father and mother were always riding or driving.

Time passed, children were born, and our life oscillated between Melun and Dammarie-les-Lys, just outside Melun, and Sainte-Assise, where I used to go to kiss my grandfather and play with my little uncle and my little aunt, my juniors by one and two years respectively, my grandfather having married again.

My nurse used to take me for walks on the Melun road, which was lined with great poplars. I became friendly with an officer's son called Jean. We used to play in the ditch while our nurses chatted on a seat. Jean would gallantly invite me to share his apricot jam in a little house on the outskirts of Melun in which he lived with his mother. For some weeks it was a routine. The little boy's papa knew me well. Two months later I met that charming papa at Sainte-Assise. I rushed at him to kiss him, as usual, shouting: "How is Jean, how is your little boy?" A freezing look chilled my impetuosity. "What does this little girl mean? What is the matter with her?"

Wounded and mute with stupefaction I pondered over this strange adventure which I only unravelled later. Jean was a love-child. I began to make out very queer complications in grown-ups.

Some rich foreigners—they were Spaniards who had come to France with the Empress Eugénie—, the first rich people I had met, lived in grand style somewhere in the neighbourhood: a château, hunting, pigeon shooting, brakes with good teams of horses and all the rest. There were children too, and I accompanied my father and mother on a few days' visit to the Aguados. I was quite a little girl with golden hair. Monsieur Aguado showered favours on me and turned my young head.

Sainte-Assise was a nice Louis XVI château on a terrace rising out of the Seine, surrounded by woods full of game. I often used to go there on a visit to my grandfather Beauvau. He lived there in patriarchal fashion with his second wife, Adèle de Gontaut (who had twenty-one brothers and sisters: Joseph, afterwards member for the Basses Pyrénées, Paul, Bernard, Edmond, Gaston and

Xavier, who went through Saint-Cyr, Geneviève, the canoness, Madame de Gaigneron, Madame de Liedekerke, the Comtesse Armand, Madame d'Hurst, etc. . . .); his daughters, Jeanne de Mun and Loulou de Blacas; his sons-in-law; and his sister Béatrix, who had married Comte Horace de Choiseul. The Choiseuls occupied a villa by the waterside at Seine-Port and spent their days at Sainte-Assise.

I must say that extreme bonhomie and a pleasant spirit of indulgence prevailed. A state of placidity such as that has disappeared from our social life. There were no "parties," as they are called, at Sainte-Assise, but always between twenty and thirty people staying there and living together after a fashion impossible nowadays.

My grandfather hated solitude, and every time one of his children left him he used to exclaim: "You are disinherited!" He was fifty years old or so when he lost his father. "I am an orphan!" said he, while bedewing his progenitor with his tears. Once more thrown into despair by the death of his brother Étienne, he collapsed into a chair on returning from the funeral. In the process of taking

off his boots, his valet lingered over his feet:—

"What's the matter?"

"I think your Highness has a corn!"

"That is the crowning blow!"

Though a rich man, he indulged the usual French niggardliness. At his table he served *piquette,* the thin wine sent him in casks from his vineyards of La Sarthe. He possessed sumptuous tapestries and furniture, but never had anything repaired. The second floor rooms were paved, and I used to build castles with the loose tiles. No need to remark that there was no water laid on in the house. Every morning a footman used to carry up two buckets of cold water and a kettle of hot water which smelt of smoke.

Yet my grandfather passed, and rightly passed, for one of the largest landed proprietors of his time. He had *biens,* to use that obsolete expression, in the *départements* of Seine-et-Marne and La Sarthe, in Nivernais, that Royal Dutch of landed estates, and lastly goodness knows how many farms in Multien. He used to make tours through his domains and, good farmer and wise administrator as he was, knew how to manage

them. A lot in the avenue Montaigne awaited but his pleasure to be transformed into a mansion, but he preferred to look at it as it was from the windows of an inexpensive flat he inhabited just opposite. In his youth he had owned race-horses; then he was appointed *conseiller général* for La Sarthe and held that post for some time.

Sainte-Assise was his favourite home. In autumn he used to organize great battues of partridges and rabbits, much sought after, but he did not preserve pheasants. Thanks to his thrift he was able to increase his fortune, and to this day a dozen families, my own among them, live on the Beauvau money.

Gouty and rubicund, he had in the middle of his face a great red nose, the family nose, alas! When my father wanted to mortify me, he used to say: "You will have your grandfather's nose." When he was a young man, Marc de Beauvau had the paternity of a child laid to his charge. The infant inherited the famous nose, and the saying grew up: "God pardons, the world forgets, but the nose remains."

A number of double marriages had mixed up the generations; my great-aunt Béatrix, my grandfather's sister, was a contemporary of my mother's. She loved her at once as her sister, her chosen companion and her daughter. As she had lost eleven children in their tenderest infancy, her mother-love still lay fallow. In those days the cultivation of the affections occupied the leisure time now devoted to speed. A sun-lapped terrace from which united and affectionate families would watch the slanting rays of the sun striking the feet of French poplars took the place of the Lido.

Those two young women were inseparable. My aunt Choiseul's grief at the death of my mother was, in consequence, tremendous.

She had the goodness to transfer her affection to me. When she used to come into our schoolroom, avoiding the drawing-rooms with their *mondain* chatter, her appearance was greeted with cries of joy: "Here's aunt Choiseul!" and we would form a circle round her to listen to her countless stories told and mimed with great spirit. Sometimes she brought flowers from Viry or something from the

confectioners: "A Wanner!" we used to cry out at the sight of a box of preserves or a cream tart brought from the Viennese pastry-cook's.

My mother (my father's second wife, that is to say) was a little jealous of aunt Choiseul. But I took no notice of the malicious little phrases she used to throw out in that direction. For instance, she thought her plain, and pretended to "see" her in every farmer's wife of La Sarthe. "What did she tell you?" she would ask after every visit to my aunt Béatrix. It is hard to repeat an airy conversation, so I used to remodel it on my way home.

Horace de Choiseul was the great object of his wife's devotion and adoration. She never levelled her close-sighted gaze through the lenses of her lorgnette at anything but what Horace had admired and only saw the universe through his eyes. Her own were clever and shrewd for all that. "Dear and witty Comtesse . . ." Monsieur Thiers wrote to her.

But, like Siamese cats, she never trusted her little feet outside the family circle. In an aside my father once mentioned certain escapades of my uncle's when I was in the room. Overwhelmed, I

broke in: "But I thought he was so fond of my aunt?" "Silly girl, that has nothing to do with it." What a subject to carry away for meditation beneath the plane trees of Vallière! "He loves his wife, he loves other women, how can that be?" The human soul, with its strange needs, began to be revealed to me.

Horace de Choiseul was my grandfather's brother-in-law. He was one of the most intelligent and delightful men I have met. But, wait a moment! He was odious with all persons of the masculine sex, vilifying them and ridiculing them with caustic wit. He did not even raise his eyes to look at them and never spoke to them except on business.

I never knew anyone with a similar passion for women—and when I say "women" I do not mean "mistresses." He could not live without a feminine atmosphere round about him and he used to tell me that women were Nature's masterpieces and that men were disgusting brutes compared with them; he spent his life in loving them, flattering them, worshipping them, and surrounding them with a thousand exquisite attentions. If a lady

loved music he sent her a serenade. If she left her carriage she would, on returning, find in it the flowers she liked. The presents he gave were those the heart desired. When his daughter-in-law married, his wedding present consisted of a feather fan, a riding horse and a diamond. His favours were those of an eastern prince. And this attitude of his extended to every woman on earth, whatever her status, whether she was Hortense Schneider (whose last lover he was) or his old housekeeper Marie.

The story was told me however that, having a passion for a delicious little woman who resisted him, he ravished her. The poor lady was not long in noticing certain consequences. Since her husband had left her, her situation was extremely embarrassing. For two months she jogged about unsuccessfully on the roads of Germany and Italy and, in the end, confessed it all to her mother-in-law. That intelligent woman gives her son to understand that the Holy Ghost often attends to wives neglected by their husbands . . . and a daughter was born. Whenever I happen to meet Madame de Z . . . , I have an hallucination and

think: "Hullo, my uncle Choiseul has shaved off his moustache."

At sixty-nine he married, for love, a woman of forty, his niece the Marquise d'Adda. Left an inconsolable widow, she lived in the memory of the nine years of incomparable happiness which he gave her.

My uncle Horace was fond of me in a manner at once paternal and gallant. Up to the time of his second marriage I used to spend a fortnight every summer with him. In delicious gossipings he told me the story of his life.

When he shewed me a book containing the signature of his mother, Fanny Sébastiani, I felt a deadly qualm come over me. It was to me as if from its pages there dripped the blood of that wretched woman, whom her husband dealt thirty dagger-thrusts on the groundfloor of the hotel Sébastiani in the Faubourg Sainte-Honoré in 1847. The circumstances of the drama are well known. and every time a journalist is hard put to it for something to print he retails for the thousandth time "The murder of the Duchesse de Praslin."

Ought I to say something about the deed? I

chose to keep silent. He said simply: "I loved my mother dearly and I realized she was unhappy. I was nine years old when she died . . . My sisters' governess used to go to bed in gloves lined with bread-crumbs soaked in milk so as to have white hands . . ." It was for that baggage that his father murdered his mother.

My uncle Horace never spoke of that grim affair but, alas: he thought about it continually. And that, perhaps, was the reason why he shunned the society of men. Coming down to the country one day, he bought *Le Temps* at the railway bookstall. On the front page he read: "The murder of the Duchesse de Praslin": news sixty years old. He was completely upset on reaching home and, without saying a word, countermanded an entertainment he had arranged for his daughter-in-law.

On the morning of the murder the Choiseul children were taken to the nearest neighbour who happened to be none other than the dowager Comtesse de Clermont-Tonnerre. They were sent on to convents and boarding-schools. Horace wanted to go into the Navy, but his grandfather, Maréchal Sébastiani, objected. By the time he was dead, Hor-

ace had passed the age limit, so he got over the difficulty by "crossing the line," that is to say by shipping as cabin-boy on a boat bound for Brazil. He was at sea for two months, gazing at the tropical stars. He was perhaps the first European to enjoy the beauty of nigger music and used to speak enthusiastically of the chants sung by the blacks as they returned at night from the plantations. The Birth of the Blues was accomplished.

Learning, however, that the Crimean war had broken out, he returned to France, enlisted, became ensign to General Magnan and took part in the siege of Sebastopol. He passed from hot to cold with the impetuosity of adolescence. One night he and his comrades were bivouacking round a bucket of boiling coffee and the candle fell in. Only the wick could be fished out, but the coffee was swallowed down amidst the laughter of the young men. In the Russian trenches he met Galliffet, became his friend and remained so in spite of continual disputes. At the age of nineteen he was awarded the Médaille Militaire, returned to France and set off again on the Italian campaign with the rank of sub-lieutenant. He picked up a dead gen-

eral on the field of battle, made a triumphal entry into Milan and received the Cross of the Legion of Honour.

When the war was over he found barrack-life at Chartres a little drab and sent in his papers. It was, I think, then that he took an *entresol* flat in the Rue Royale and began to lead the elegant life of a club-man of that period. These, apparently, used to arrive at their clubs at midnight, having deposited their lawful wives at home. Then they began to play the fool and, after high play, would go off to supper with ladies of light virtue. This festive life did not prevent him from reflecting and judging. He did not love the Empire and believed that the Emperor was nothing but a blunderer. The future shewed he was right.

His elder brother had sold the Praslin family seat of Vaux-le-Vicomte to Monsieur Sommier, but Horace remained attached to the *département* of his childhood. He knew his Seine-et-Marne well and bought the villa of Seine-Port. He was put as candidate for this *département* in 1869, under the auspices of the Liberal opposition. My grandfather Beauvau, who was a Bonapartist, was

dumbfounded by his brother-in-law's resolution. "He couldn't possibly be elected," he said over and over again, raising his hands to heaven, and voted against him. The event was not changed for all that. Horace de Choiseul was elected with only one vote against, probably my grandfather's. The war of '70 found him a colonel of the Garde Nationale.

Thiers wanted to appoint him ambassador at the Quirinal. He refused on account of the papal question. "A Choiseul," said he, "cannot be the first to sanction the diminution of the papacy." An odd lapse into atavism, prejudicial to his career. In 1871 his electors returned him for the Assemblée Nationale, where he sat on the left centre. Then he was sent out as envoy plenipotentiary to Florence. He could have had a noteworthy career, but with his marvellously shrewd intelligence and quick judgment he did not possess great capacity for work. My aunt often said to me: "Horace cannot sit all day on a chair behind a writing desk." This disability stood in his way. The complications of modern life demand more than intelligence; they require patient effort.

The Comte de Choiseul never renounced his fidelity to Republican opinions and policy. He was Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in Jules Ferry's ministry. But his genuinely liberal opinions irritated society. He was the first, in their opinion, to "rat." When he went to a club, a void was created round about him, no one spoke to him. No man can live with a group whose ideas he does not share: so he openly broke with his environment.

He infected me with his contempt for the idle rich, and to my uncle Choiseul I also owe my Republican ideas. When I was a child, my aunt gave me a little necklace of blue, white and red pearls.

"But that's the tricolour; I don't want to wear a Republican necklace!"

The Choiseuls looked at me with such contemptuous irony that it struck me and gave me pause.

Horace de Choiseul was deputy for Seine-et-Marne until the day that he and the Comte Henri Greffulhe happened to be rival candidates for the same seat in consequence of a certain eleventh-hour vacillation in policy. Greffulhe gave up his seat and Choiseul was beaten.

Horace was adopted for the constituency of Corsica, where his mother's family came from. He had, besides, something Italian in his face, a yellow complexion, black, slightly slanting eyes and a big head with powerful brows. Stocky and small, he was not handsome, but his wit, his learning and his intelligence amply compensated for lack of physical beauty.

My uncle Choiseul had very good taste. In the epoch of plush and padding he had a severely plain flat which would have been deemed perfection in 1926. His great discernment permitted him to buy, cheap, fine works of art, selected with astonishing taste and put among the family souvenirs. I can recall a delicious sepia drawing by Fragonard, *Qu'en dit l'Abbé,* which with many other objects of art he sold to pay for his Choiseul nephews' education. On his chimney-piece there stood a crystal vase of flowers, and a delicious miniature representing his grandmother, Madame de Coigny, *"la Jenue Captive,"* seated on a rush bottom chair in the Conciergerie.

On June afternoons through the half open windows of his flat at 232 Rue de Rivoli, facing the

Tuileries, he could hear the hubbub of Paris, the paper boys shouting out: "Latest article by Monsieur de Rochefort. . . ."

At my grandfather's death the Horace de Choiseuls left their villa at Seine-Port and settled at Viry-Châtillon, near Juvisy. There my uncle lived until his death.

When he retired from politics he gave himself up entirely to horticulture. A second Candide, he would be up by four in the morning to water his garden. Thanks to his care the park at Viry became one bouquet of flowers. The most beautiful roses I have smelt and the most luscious fruit I have tasted were those from Viry. Barbier was supplied by his gardeners with the early fruit and vegetables of his renowned estate.

Many an afternoon have I spent at Viry. My uncle used to sit under a great chestnut tree, surrounded by a collection of his nieces, then young and charming, whose presence consoled him for the death of his wife, my aunt Béatrix. There were Henriette d'Harcourt, Constance de Montalembert and Mary d'Adda, whom he afterwards married.

He loved to have his nieces for himself alone and could not do with the husbands. Madame de Montalembert was divorced, Madame d'Adda a widow. But two husbands remained, Henriette's and mine. Henriette wanting to join her husband in some provincial town where he was stationed, he made a terrible scene, and Henriette cried with her nose pressed against the window. I incited her to disobedience, and she left for camp at Orléans in spite of my uncle's remonstrance: "A young woman ought not to run about in trains." And one broiling hot day I too was compelled to go to Paris to discuss a business matter with my husband—who had not been invited to Viry.

It must be granted that my uncle devoted himself to the little fools we then were with such profuse generosity, kindness and understanding, that if we gave him for a short fortnight in the year the joy of our gaiety and our youth, he returned it us an hundredfold. He would talk to us of his military, political and diplomatic career, would tell us of his travels and family anecdotes, instructing us in countless ways, or playing with us like a child.

He had a cruel wit and spared no one: the men of our family had no great love for him, notably the Muns.

His nephew Robert de Mun, whose political ideas differed from his own, was talking about hard times, lapped though he was in affluence. "They ought to give us back our great possessions, they ought to give them back!"—"But it is precisely now that you have them," Horace retorted, alluding to the new family glory. For Robert de Mun, my grandfather's son-in-law, was the brother of Albert de Mun, the celebrated Catholic orator. He did not possess the latter's eloquence, but he had the gift of organization and gave his brother much help in founding and managing Roman Catholic societies.

My father, who was irreligious and sincere even to cynicism, could not get on with Robert de Mun. So, although Lumigny, the Muns' estate in Seine-et-Marne, was next to ours, I did not get to know Albert de Mun until much later, at dinner parties.

Monsieur de Mun, an officer in the cuirassiers,

had led a gay life in Algeria till his marriage with pretty Mademoiselle d'Andlau, and, from that moment a devout and "practising" Catholic he, his wife and their many children lived the life of such a one in the grand manner. He divided his time between the lower House and his studies in Christian philosophy.

Taking him home in her carriage one day, the beautiful Madame de X . . . made him advances.

"It goes to my heart, but I am never unfaithful to my wife."

He used to go to mass every morning with a great prayer book under his arm. I know that his religious sentiments were genuine, but his piety was a little ostentatious. Simple, almost to monkish austerity in his private life, he sought worldly possessions for his children; they contracted alliances with celebrated champagne and cognac.

I have never heard Monsieur de Mun speak, and regret it; for I know he was a magnificent orator. Already as a child he used to climb on the table and make speeches. For a long time he was the greatest orator of the Right in Parliament,

perhaps of the whole House, where he was a man of mark. The nobility of his nature attracted the esteem and respect even of his opponents. His fine presence, the artistry of his gestures and an extraordinary voice made him a veritable tribune. He was in fact the representative of the papacy in France and used to have long confabulations with Leo XIII, whose ideas he propagated. In many a memorable duel of debate did he engage with Waldeck-Rousseau. He was the last great parliamentary figure of the Right. When the Panthéon was taken out of the hands of the Church in 1885, he made a famous speech in which he displayed his finest qualities in order to save the Church of Sainte Geneviève, the patron saint of Paris.

He possessed great moral influences, and who knows whether the present Catholic movement has not sprung from the impressions which Monsieur de Mun sowed with his sweeping gestures in the hearts of the young people of his day?

It is grievous always to have to oppose Church and State, for it is a question whether one does not use Religion to alter constitutional forms. Never-

theless, it does seem to me that since the re-establishment of the Concordat in France every Frenchman may live in a church from six in the morning to six at night, hear new offices every day and receive the sacraments proper to his age and station. At the moment, to be sure, education is secular, and that presents a problem.

Albert de Mun was elected to the Académie and made one of the last of his fine speeches in receiving the poet Henri de Régnier into that body. Régnier's nymphs were not pleasing to Monsieur de Mun, and his vibrant, ardent voice rent the author of *La Cité des Eaux* and *Jeux Rustiques et Divins* on the day of his admission.

Monsieur de Mun was descended from the rationalist philosopher Helvétius, who wrote *De l'Esprit*. With his ancestor's intelligence he combined the Creole charm of the La Ferronays, his grandparents, who are depicted in *Le Récit d'une Sœur*. His aunt, Madame Craven, published that story. In reading it you really have the impression of getting to know pious souls. That touching book, made up of letters and private journals, affords an intimate insight into those families of

the early nineteenth century who had anchored their life on Rome and were at once lettered, cosmopolitan, and Roman Catholic. The bells of Rome ring a full peal through those pages. Montalembert was a friend of the Muns and the La Ferronays. His outlook was theirs.

My aunt Jeanne de Mun, Robert's wife, carried overflowing verve and gaiety into this environment. To the end of her life she preserved her gift of playing to the gallery, of displaying spirits and wit. If you asked her how she was she would answer: "I cough and spit and do everything proper to my age." By the side of Albert de Mun's majesty her realistic humour formed a lively contrast.

During the war of '70 the young wives, on their knees in the chapel of Lumigny, were interceding with the Lord to spare their husbands. They heard my aunt Jeanne murmuring none too softly: "*Mon Dieu,* take Pierre, take Albert, take Louis, but leave me Robert."

From time to time she had a panic about her

money and would jump into a carriage to come for advice either to my father or to Baron Alphonse de Rothschild. "Ought I to sell my Brazilians? Ought I to buy French *rentes?* I don't want to lose my *Saint-Frusquin,* my little all." Baron Rothschild would re-assure her with a laugh and in the end gave the name of Saint Frusquin to one of the horses from his racing stables.

My aunt Jeanne de Mun's flat never grew emptier. Her nephews, her nieces, her children, her grandchildren used to gather round her chair. Her own words acted as a stimulus to her and her wicked remarks would hold the most divers visitors: Madame Jules Porgès, Loucheur, an English general, Monsieur Paléologue, Forain, Deschanel, Anna de Noailles, Madame Kinen the singer, and the Comte A. de Laborde.

III

LA SARTHE

MY GRANDFATHER BEAUVAU LEFT ME Mangé, a good estate in La Sarthe, with a little Louis XII château, which increased the family well-being. Up till then my parents had lived parsimoniously enough. Prodigies of self-sacrifice and management had been required of my mother in order to make both ends of our budget meet. The servants, who were given to exaggeration, used to make a scene if I left the soap in my tub.

I can recall the flat we lived in at number 1 Rue François I, with decorations in a horrible style by the upholsterer of the period, Pijassou: hangings and plush everywhere. The drawing-room was buttercup-yellow with blue carpets, the dining-room complete *à la Henri II*. My father had a little "classical" smoking-room; as for my mother's *cabinet de toilette,* a work-girl of 1926

would not have put up with it: a black cubby-hole with a marble washstand and a piece of striped calico to hide what it was necessary to hide. The bath room was in the same style.

The materials used in that flat had been devised to last a hundred years, for to trouble about furnishing more than once in a lifetime never occurred to people; you got your furniture for good. The sole adornments were the family portraits. There were no works of art, no one caring greatly about them.

Only the Rothschild family formed an exception. When my brother Armand was born, the Baronne Charles de Rothschild, wishing to give her daughter a nice present, went to the best known dealer in Paris, *"A la Croix de ma Mère,"* and bought a complete Louis XV suite, with Gobelin tapestries representing La Fontaine's fables. She gave 30,000 francs for it. That suite was sold for 400,000 francs by my father to Baron X, who sold it again to Stettiner for 800,000 francs, who sold it again for 1,600,000 francs to an American collector. I have seen the suite in New York.

Elegance was supported on other values than

those of furniture. So my parents, though far from wealthy at that time, had two or three footmen, magnificent horses, and gave excellent dinners to their friends. Very cosmopolitan, they entertained many foreigners, English, Austrian, Italian. We had a large English family which often came to the Rue François I, relatives of my grandmother MacKinnon.

One of them, my cousin George Bennett, later Lord Tankerville, exercised an unparalleled influence on my tender years. I used to stand for hours at the nursery window watching for him to cross the landing of the staircase I could see across the courtyard. He paid a daily call on my mother, a fresh gardenia in his buttonhole. George Bennett was a dandy, well known in London for his extravagances and his good looks. He used to take out a handful of gold coins and scatter them under the furniture for me to pick up, crawling about on all fours. In the country he took me rabbit-shooting with him and ordered me to finish off the wounded beasts by knocking their heads against trees. I came home with my pinafore all blood-

stains. But what wouldn't I have done to obey Bennett?

He could sing, play the piano, paint and do tricks like a clown. On a call my father and mother were paying in the neighbourhood, he came in behind them walking on his hands, and one night he jumped into the ring at the Hippodrome to throw cartwheels with the clowns.

One fine day he disappeared and remained twenty years without seeing us again. I fancy my mother's virtue had something to do with his departure.

His sister Ida Tankerville was like him in every respect. She had married Lord Dalhousie and often came to Paris. She rode out with my father and enjoyed a roaring success. She confided to my mother that the amatory incompetence of Englishmen compelled her from time to time to come to Paris to cheer herself up. Capricious and spoilt, she said to her husband one day as they were looking through an illustrated geography-book: "I want to bathe in that lake." It was an Australian lake. They set out, bathed and returned. But, un-

happily, during the homeward passage she fell seriously ill, could not receive the necessary attention and died on her arrival at Le Havre. Her husband survived her no longer than two days. Their four little boys were brought up by Charley and Estelle Ramsay, Lord Dalhousie's brother and sister-in-law. The second of these children, Ramsay, who went into the Navy, married Lady Patricia, the daughter of the Duke of Connaught. These Tankervilles are descended from the Norman Tancarvilles, whose château (of the same name) still looks out over the estuary of the Seine.

When I was seven I couldn't read. I was put in charge of a charming old lady with gout in her fingers, who could not hold a pen. At last I consented to do some work. Very quickly in fact I was in a position to read *Les Malheurs de Sophie* and *Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Sea.* I learned some of La Fontaine's fables and recited *Les Deux Pigeons.* Madame Monton often took me to the Trocadéro aquarium. That dark, mysterious place, illumined by daylight filtering

through layers of water in which the phantoms of fishes pass to and fro, enchanted me.

Another spectacle has stuck in my memory. It has almost disappeared from the Parisian scene:—the *chiffonniers* or rag pickers. For reasons hidden from me, we used to get up early. As soon as I was dressed, I would look out of the window and in the grey-blue of the morning I have seen the *chiffonniers,* with a basket on their backs and a little lantern in their hands, picking over the heaps of garbage piled up on the pavement.

Attracted by all the aspects of the life which surrounded me, I was anxious to know the other inhabitants of the house. But how to set about it? I pretended to make a mistake and resolutely rung at the first floor flat. Followed by Madame Monton, I plunged right into the Chabot family's home.

"What are you looking for, Mademoiselle?"

"I have made a mistake."

I gained my ends and made the acquaintance of Isabelle de Rohan-Chabot, who came to play with me every now and then, although our parents were not acquainted.

Then there was the charming lady on the ground floor, Blanche Lee Childe, a red-haired consumptive. She showed me her travel-albums. She had gone up the Nile in dahabiehs and was a friend of Loti's. As a young man Salomon Reinach had greatly admired her and he has spoken to me of that pale young woman who played Chopin so well and died an untimely death.

At that time our flat became a little cramped; for there were four of us children, close together in age. I would allow no inequality in our treatment. Our nurses having had the unhappy notion of installing Armand and Corise opposite one another with the silver services they had had given them and of relegating me to a little table by myself, anger gradually took possession of me. A plateful of spinach was brought me: I plunged my hands into it and energetically besprinkled therewith the apartment, the nurses and the unfortunate little diners. I had restored equality. From that moment I was supreme in the nursery, and the nurses feared me.

I was no worker. Life interested me a great deal more than the pitch-pine table in a corner of the

linen-room where I did my pages of pot-hooks. I loved going for walks, looking at the shows in the Champs-Élysées, in the regular avenues of which I used to meet my small friends. I indulged in orgies of ginger-bread and barley-sugar and whipped my top into the legs of passers-by.

I adored my dear Paris already. And I would bowl my hoop now towards the Arc de Triomphe, now towards the Obélisque. I saw Gambetta's funeral procession go by, and that impressed me tremendously. Gambetta (whom everyone I knew called "Grand Bêta") enjoyed such popularity that in my sight he stood for some sort of fabulous being agitating mankind. The Choiseuls admired him.

In the month of June I used to go and pick up the extinguished fairy lights of the Jardin de Paris, which stood on the site of the Petit Palais. It consisted of great shrubberies lit with chinese lanterns, in which the gay life of Paris used to disport itself on warm evenings. For, in those distant days, there was snow in winter and summers torrid enough to dry up completely the rivulet which flowed through the bottom of the park at Crénille,

near Melun, where we used to go in summer before we went to La Sarthe.

The estate of Mangé in La Sarthe belonged to me, and my parents were merely awaiting the day on which I should either marry or come of age in order to put it into my hands. So I had the sentiment of territorial possession from my tenderest years. My mother hated the country and was visibly bored there. In the morning she used to walk her lap-dog on the gravel and in the afternoon read back numbers of *La Revue des Deux-Mondes*. She let my father undertake the cares of the estate and wished for one nearer Paris; it was no displeasure to her to envisage the time when I would take her place at Mangé.

We used to leave Paris at the end of June. If household considerations, such as washing-day, delayed our departure until July, I used to lapse into a state of despairing stupor: I was being filched of fine days. To skip on the macadam or sit on iron chairs near chestnut trees already shewing signs of

wear seemed to me a massacre of the joys of summer.

The journey began at Montparnasse station and was divided by a two hours' wait at Le Mans station, where the nurses counted the children, the tickets and the trunks. I don't know why, but we always took along with us two children's beds, and my brother was certain that the weight of those beds thwarted the train wrecker who operated between Le Mans and Mayet. The dramatic call of the porter throwing open the waiting-room door and commanding: "Passengers for Alençon, Évreux and Rouen, and for Tours, Orléans and Angoulême" conjured up, in a chilly apartment, reeking of coal, the mirage of far-away fabulous cities.

The yellow bus was waiting at Mayet and slowly climbed the hill. Two children were asleep on their nurses' laps, a sour, musty smell of provisions pervaded the vehicle, and I would put down the window to receive the fresh night air of "the country."

"There must have been at least 200 francs excess to pay on the luggage," the governess would mutter.

The following morning I used to make a tour of the house in a rapture I have never recovered. Intoxicated with the silence, I breathed the peculiar smell of woodwork and old parquet floors. At the bend of the staircase I greeted the Princesse of Monaco, whose naked bosom was veiled by a modest Cupid. Only the fair Corisandre's feet were on my level, and to contemplate her little red head I should have had to climb up the stairs again. With a glissade I passed by the Renaissance furniture of the dining-room supplied by Bidache, and made sure that the powdered young man in a pink suit was still in his corner opposite the piano. A witness of my daily torment, he always preserved his quizzical air. My inspection was continued in the little drawing-room with the green hangings ruined by the sun, where the card-table had not yet been opened up and the marquetry bookcase, full of novels by Ohnet and Bourget and the works of the philosopher Caro, was still locked.

The house hardly interested me; I left it to people who sit still for long stretches of time. For me the shade of the forest, the woody footpaths, the wall whose breaches I knew in order to get over

them and jump down into ploughed fields and vineyards.

My father and mother rarely spent July in La Sarthe. They lingered in Paris, at watering-places, and did not come down until September. So we were lords and masters of the place. Never was there a happier society composed of four children, the governess Mademoiselle Vivier, our tutor, a pug dog and a pony. Our lessons themselves were sun-lapped. The insects buzzed in the schoolroom whose high window looked out over the open country, from which it was separated by no garden, either in the French or the English style. We were kept at it until such time as the clatter of cups on a tray gave the signal for tea and freedom, and, unconstrained, we children used to fly off to our favourite occupations.

I used to drive a little carriage into the forest or read hidden in a haystack or near a clear spring in a dark grove of beeches lighted by fern-brakes. There in later years I read Sainte Beuve's *Lundis*, and it was in that dark forest of my memory that marched by, pell-mell, the Princesse des Ursins, the Abbé de Bernis, Marie Antoinette, Joseph de

Maistre, Balzac, Voltaire, Sully, etc. I botanized passionately among the July flowers: white umbellifers, ladies' slippers, wild centauries, snapdragons which grew among the stones, and pink foxgloves on the commons. Doctor Guignard, an excellent man of whom I was very fond, used to help me and shew me unknown glades and new stretches of waste land.

We also learned to draw and paint. I copied a harrow, an abandoned plough, a sunset. "Which way up ought one to look at your landscape?" my father would sometimes ask. Vexed, but not discouraged, I went on patiently with my studies after nature.

It was at the sight of an apple-tree with twisted branches, vibrating in an incomparable green light, that I experienced the revelation of colour. That apple-tree, small but magnificent, concentrated upon itself such a diversity of green, that it left the oaks and chestnuts all around nowhere. I was wild about that divine colour radiating from each of its branches, and for the first time I was overtaken by a sort of visual intoxication. The brilliant blue of the sky seemed to change into

green as it rested on the edge of the leaves.

My humble Sarthe apple-tree will always stay in my memory as the first thing that dazzled me with light. The Benozzos of Florence and the Carpaccios of Venice have given me similar joy, but none more thrilling than that first unpremeditated contact with a living apple-tree in July.

The square château, which lacked one wing, jutted out its great tower on to the meadow side, and the other living-rooms faced the forest. Life there was essentially rural, and we used to join in the work of the fields.

The moment the close season was over my father would start shooting partridges on the skirts of the chestnut-woods. I went out to meet him and could gallop from ridge to ridge over the cabbage-fields. Then one day in the hayfields the meadow saffron appeared, sprung up in a night. From their mauve corols rose up the first of the autumn mists which putrefy the leaves on the trees. The appearance of meadow saffron gave me at the end of every September the same shudder of morbid pleasure I have always felt at things which are coming to an end.

In the morning we used to ride in the forest of

Bercé. That good smell of horses who have got warm and quiver under the sting of the gadfly became associated in my mind with our seigneurial summers, with heaths turning red, with great chestnut trees, with very clear, very blue vistas which we greeted with the words: "Over yonder, that's Touraine." On the way home I used to give my pony its head for a gallop over a long meadow of dark green lucerne grass.

In the afternoon the steward used to fetch us in a covered trap to make a tour of the farms. Those scattered little homesteads gave an impression of harsh poverty. The yards were full of mud and muck, which I scraped off my feet on going into the farmhouse for a snack of milk and chestnuts.

"Never mind about your feet, princess; never mind about your feet!" This is how the peasants used to address me, in memory of my grandfather.

The farmers' beds stood directly on the beaten earth. They had their meals seated on benches on either side of a great wooden table in front of the hearth. You could hear the pigs grunting in the next room. The richest farmers' wives of the

countryside never wore stockings except on Sundays.

That generation of peasants had no idea of comfort, lived with its beasts, cared about nothing but the harvests. They got on very well with the squires on whom they were dependent. Nevertheless, there was a radical party called "the Reds," who presented a front against the party of the châteaux, priests and nuns, and I can recall certain villagers who used to jam down their hats and emit a jet of saliva when we passed by. The good Sisters tried to sneak little girls away from the lay schools and were successful: for my mother spoilt the pupils of their schools immoderately. She had difficulty in making the Sister Superior understand that she wished to help the afflicted, even those from lay schools.

Quite at home in the nuns' house, I used sometimes to give the girls a class or a lecture. They excelled in feats of memory, without understanding a word they were saying. They knew better than myself the chronology of the kings of France and the dates of battles and, fixing their eyes and

twisting their pinafores, could answer the subtlest questions on theology.

On prize-giving days I used to place laurel-wreaths on well-oiled little heads and we listened to speeches which, in spite of their "reverend benefactresses," gave us the fidgets. Only a few years ago, I experienced once more that impression of prize-giving day, with its hubbub, its funny incidents, its shrill girls' choir, its mixture of black suits, sunlight and paper flowers. It was at the Sorbonne, and members of the Lower House were called on to expound to an excited crowd what they had been doing at the League of Nations. That business did not take up a minute; but, mounted on a rostrum between two rows of flags, with agitated mien and trembling voice, Monsieur le Député X . . . was saying: "Well . . . myself . . . I have been accused of being no patriot . . . I, whose heart never beats but in tune with my country . . . I . . . Oh, my dear friends . . . what I want, what we all want . . . we who are here assembled on this great day, in this hall which in the past has resounded to so many patriotic speeches . . . What we want, I say, is a France

going from beauty to beauty and from strength to strength . . . this France of ours with all her generosity . . . this France whose ideas are a beacon to the world . . ."

But at that juncture the ideas could be a beacon to nobody; for there weren't any.

Young girls dressed in white sang songs which they read from sheets of paper which they held out before them, while Monsieur le Député X . . . mopped his brow. This prize-giving affair is an integral part of French sentiment. We love pomp and precedence and hollow words and emotion.

All the same, the country prize-giving established a fraternal link between village and château. Nowadays these links have slackened; the squires and their families are less interested and more nomadic, and some of the country folk, who own the farms they used to rent, have, in becoming agricultural artisans, discarded the humility of the peasant.

Among our neighbours, the d'Argens family was the most intrepid. The Marquis Hippolyte, Frédéric d'Argens and their brother-in-law Léonce Levavasseur never missed a day's hunting. They

lived almost all the year round at Le Grand Lucé, a Louis XIV château whose big diamond-pane windows and Mansard roof seemed made to shelter the heroines of Régnier. Hippolyte used to come to the meet, if not powdered, at least painted. The rustic marquis had the art of make-up and on great occasions used to paint his mother and sister. He would fly from one room to the other with his powders and unguents: *"Maman, maman,* you must wait for me!" When they were together they looked like their family portraits.

The Marquis de Broc at Les Perrets had had Léon Bollé's of Le Mans build him a kind of locomotive which hauled a great coach. This engine, doing its six miles an hour, was the first motor car. There were some trifling inconveniences: its weight was such that it cut redoubtable ruts and could not cross wooden bridges; moreover, continual feeding with water was necessary. There were numerous breakdowns, but Monsieur de Broc, with his diplodoccus full of friends, traversed the *département* in sensational style. The château of Perrets and its park were very well kept, especially the undergrowth, in which no shoot of ivy stood

out beyond the others: all was as neat as a vignette.

A stout man with a sensual face, Thibaud de Broc perfumed himself outrageously, in order once and for all to cover up the scent of the little ladies whose pursuit during six months in the year replaced for him the pursuit of game.

The opening of the shooting season brought together a great crowd. It seemed to me a law of life, observance of which was a physical and moral necessity. Never did the life of the squires beat with a warmer pulsation. The movement of the men, the keepers, the carriages, the final picture of the day's bags assembled in the evening on the lawn, the general contentment pervading this atmosphere in which the squire became so intimately a son of the soil—all this gave me the joy of territorial possession, with the certainty of its duration, since September never fails to bring round its sun and its partridges.

When Prince Aymon de Lucinge came over from Chardonneux, the Baronne d'Estrella made her appearance among the guns. In these rustic surroundings Madame d'Estrella, a pretty Brazil-

ian unaccustomed to walking, amused me by her too urban appearance. Women at that time used to maintain the same attitude in the country as in town;—moreover the men preferred them like that. Their shoes had to be tight and their heels too high to allow them to walk at ease, their skirts were long and their hats big; it was a sport for the gentlemen to help them get about and to treat them like small precious objects very different from themselves.

The Baronne d'Estrella had a number of little affectations, and I used to go and find her a shooting stool. She arranged things skilfully for spending the autumn in La Sarthe, where Prince Aymon went for the shooting. As if by magic she became the intimate friend of the landowners in the neighbourhood and in that character went from house to house. She and the Prince de Lucinge argued, laughed and teased one another without ceasing, which, I believe, is a sign of love.

The furthest shoot was at Champmarin, a little Renaissance castle turned into a farm. Two mullioned windows and a great roof made it a most attractive place. The poet Racan was born there

in 1589. A professor from the university of Poitiers made that discovery, which filled him with such enthusiasm that he afterwards bought the little farm of me. It was surrounded by an acre or two of vineyard. We used to drink the wine made there, which went to our heads at once. The children and the keepers got slightly drunk.

The Comtesse de Puységur ranked among the sportsmen. A skilful shot, she only once peppered some unlucky neighbour. She sat sobbing at the side of a ditch. They reassured her about the condition of her victim, whereupon she confessed the true motive of her tears: "No one will ever invite me again, they will say I am dangerous." Nothing of the sort ensued, she was kind and agreeable and animated the dinner-table after a day's sport with uninterrupted laughter.

Altogether, as far as I can remember, all these folk from the West of France were jovial in the extreme and breathed contentment with life. Certain of the future and free from care, they took every advantage of their pleasant, easy existence. No great problem tormented them. I fancy even that their intelligence had a tendency to become

torpid amid all such well-being. The most advanced spirits would talk politics for the smoking space of a cigar, averring that monarchical government had had its day, that the country had done with it and that, besides, a rich and prosperous France had nothing to wish for. A harmonious sense of equality prevailed in our province, no incongruous element was able to percolate.

Some of the squires left the countryside when the newly metalled roads of mid-November made neighbourly visits impossible. The task of smoothing the surface of roads was, in those days, entrusted to winter and travellers. Nowadays the *conseillers-généraux* go to the expense of a steam roller. Then, when my father had taken the four stags of Bercé Forest, we returned to Paris, leaving behind in the wintry storms the villages, the levelled fields and the sportsmen collected round the forests given over to shooting and hunting.

. . . And I thought it would always be like that, that I should grow up on that family estate and

that there also the children I should have some day would be brought up in their turn. But Baron Charles de Rothschild died. An immense fortune descended upon my parents' shoulders. My father learned of this when travelling, by reason—so he maintained—of the way people were staring at him. With the tact characteristic of her, my mother decided that for some time at any rate our way of life should not be modified, and she forced my father to pursue this line and, for a few more years, to put up with the modest château at Mangé, with its five guest-rooms and solitary bathroom.

I adored Mangé.

Reading Victor Hugo under the lamp one evening in Paris, I heard my father say in an off-hand way:

"I have just let Mangé for three years."

My heart stopped, my hands were bathed in sweat.

"You've let Mangé?" I stammered.

"Yes, we can't live in two places at once." He had recently bought the estate of Mortefontaine.

"But if I should get married before the three years are up?"

"You won't get married."

Three years without seeing Mangé!

"Who have you let it to?"

"To some very careful people, the Montgomerys."

What good was there then in the rights of property, when they were reft from me in this way by my father's will? My powerlessness was patent, and I felt shame and despair.

In the sequel it happened that the Montgomerys got tired of Mangé and sub-let it to some Americans. Those horrible people did not live in Mangé; they polluted it. They had orgies of harlots and spoiled the whole countryside with their preposterous tipping. La Belle Otero was one of the inmates of Mangé.

Drunk after a copious lunch, dead drunk I might even say, Mr. M—— was taken with the idea of dressing up like a jockey and galloping round the paddock. He lost his balance and smashed his skull against a tree.

When, once married, I did return to Mangé, I

did not recognize my old property. The American tenants had completely perverted the relations between château and countryside. Prices had become exorbitant, demands preposterous. The house itself, stripped of its pictures and the Renaissance presses which were its pride, looked sordid. Hangings and upholstery were dirty, in holes; the carpets worn. In a word, the charm which had kept me attached to that property was so definitely broken that I acquiesced in Monsieur de Clermont-Tonnerre's wish to sell it. He was amazed at my prompt decision, failing to understand the rapid effects produced by disenchantment within twenty-four hours.

Perhaps it was my childhood which I vainly sought in the empty schoolroom and the silent corridors.

IV

THE FOUNTAIN AT DAMPIERRE

I CAN STILL HEAR, WHEN I WANT TO, THE SOFT, silvery sound of a fountain in the saloon at Dampierre.

Before taking us back to Paris, my father stayed some autumn days with the Duchesse de Luynes. We were four sturdy little hobbledehoys, accustomed rather to country life than to life in big country houses. In summer we wore gaiters because of the adders and in autumn clogs because of the mud. So the splendours of Dampierre, its deep carpets, the gilded and perfumed atmosphere of the vast saloons, a kind of solemnity pervading the air, dazzled and deeply stirred my imagination.

The Duchesse de Luynes, who loved children, proceeded to play with my young brother, whom she allowed to jump about her shoulders. Louis René's temples are harmoniously grey today, but

in those days great curls fell from his head and swept down the cheek of Aunt Yolande, as we called her.

Never had any sovereign had such an air of sovereignty. What was it due to? Small and graceful as she was, her deep blue eyes, full of extraordinary fire, and chestnut hair falling very low over the forehead (as was then the fashion), her fine teeth, pretty smile and faded complexion did not go to make up great beauty. But she had a tone and manner, a kind of imperious aura radiating from every part of her, which wrung a profound respect from those who approached her. The extreme graciousness of her smile prevented your noticing how distant her handshake was. As if by a miracle, the chairs in her drawing-room were placed at a distance from that on which she habitually seated herself and which had the air of a throne. Near friends were summoned one by one to tender their homage to her.

She was an admirable stage-manager to herself. Favoured by exceptional circumstances, she developed to its furthest limit the art of glamour, almost without suspecting it. Sarah Bernhardt in

her own theatre did not arrange her effects with a greater minuteness than the Duchesse de Luynes found to her hand.

For instance, mass used to be said every morning in the chapel of Dampierre. The priest awaited the arrival of the Duchesse before going up to the altar. Escorted by her ladies of honour, she would appear, pale and serious, draped in a long white lace mantilla which made her even paler, coming in at a little door that opened in the panelling at the side of the altar. She took her place on a large faldstool where, her head buried in her hands, she remained kneeling throughout the holy sacrifice of the mass. The rising and falling psalmody of the priest in his rich chasuble alternated with the deep sighs which the sorrows of life drew from the ducal heart of Yolande de Luynes. Her son Honoré, in a surplice and a little choir boy's calotte, acted as server, and her daughter's long, curved eyelashes swept the pages of a Roman prayer-book. When the ceremony was over the Duchesse received her guests' salutations and returned to her apartments to work with her steward.

The air of distinction about the little twenty

minutes' mass, with its absolute silence only broken by the choir-boy's bell, made more impression upon me than the good old village High Masses which I attended every Sunday in our parish church of Verneuil-le-Chétif, where from time to time you had the surprise of hearing some school-child spewing noisily on to the stone floor.

The Duchesse de Luynes's two children were charming and made a picture as they grouped themselves about her. She knew how effective that was in making impressive exits at the porch of Sainte Clotilde's in Paris. Wearing a little string-bonnet of mauve satin, she first shook hands and dealt out smiles at the outer door of the church, then all the nobs of the neighbourhood paid their respects at every step, and lastly she climbed into her open carriage with its eight springs, where she installed the two children facing her, opened a little parasol and, still smiling to right and left like a sovereign, departed amid the clatter of her horses' hoofs. I stood idly by and had to hold myself in not to applaud so successful an exit.

Catholic and Royalist before all else, the Duchesse de Luynes went on her knees before God and

before the King. Those great currents, while simplifying life for her, also brought her into the proximity of thrones. She did not shrink from crossing Europe in order to be present at the christening of little Olga, one of the Czar's daughters.

Yolande, Duchesse de Luynes et de Chevreuse, was the child of Sosthène de La Rochefoucauld, Duc de Doudeauville, and of his first wife, Mademoiselle de Polignac. The latter was the granddaughter of that Prince de Polignac who was responsible for the fatal ordinances of July 1830. They had, so he said, been dictated to him by the Blessed Virgin, who visited him nightly. "He was luckier than Saint-Joseph," the irreverent Prince Edmond de Polignac remarked.

The Duc de Doudeauville, a rich and powerful territorial magnate, president of the Jockey Club and leader of the French Royalist party, enjoyed for a long time a great position in the country, in politics and in society. He was twice married and had no adventures, his religion forbidding them. His personality, removed as far as possible from that of a man of intellect, carried out to perfection the functions for which he had been cre-

ated—to wit, to represent the monarchical party with a maximum of pomp and to have lots of children, all handsome, healthy, well provided for, well married and extremely fecund. A single exception to this magnificent rule: the marriage of La Rochefoucauld's grandson with a Roumanian light singer; but this incident does not in the least derogate from the good record of the other members of the family.

The Duc de Doudeauville's present direct descendants number about three score, still living in the most beautiful châteaux of France and possessing the best partridge-shooting: Dampierre, Maintenon, Esclimont, Entrain, Ermenonville, Chambord all but, Harcourt, Belœil in Belgium, Mouchy, Bonnétable in La Sarthe, which constituency he represented in the Lower House from 1871 to 1898. Joseph Caillaux had the impertinence to supplant him in the latter year, in spite of his promise not to contest the seat against the grief stricken old man who had just lost his wife. The Duc de Doudeauville did not even organize an electoral campaign, so sure was he of his feudal domain. When his political agents manifested some

uneasiness he replied: "Bah! they wouldn't dare!" They did dare.

Leo XIII dealt a direct blow at the French monarchists in requiring the Catholic party to give up their systematic campaign against the Republic, now it had become the government of the French nation. The Duc de Doudeauville was too old to change his way of life, which, moreover, it would have been a pity to do. He did not speak in the House, but he represented. In order to represent so forcefully, a lofty idea of his person and rights were a prime requisite. When he wrote a letter to his stewards he used to end up with the words: "I am well." Finding myself once at his table in a restaurant-car, I observed signs of impatience in him. The table was at the very end of the car and the waiter automatically served him last. "He obviously does not know who we are!"

He used to give gorgeous receptions in his town house which lay between a great courtyard and a vast garden at number 47 Rue de Varenne. I have danced there and, at the conclusion of a cotillon, seen the blue dawn creep between the red damask

curtains. "Another night lost to sleep," I used to say to myself in despair, "in another hour or two I shall be in my study."

I have heard people speak so much of the Duc de Doudeauville, of his magnificence, of his deeds and exploits, that he must have impressed his own contemporaries as strongly as Boni de Castellane did his. He had sense enough to surround himself exclusively with people who thought like him. When his daughter, the Marquise d'Harcourt, became a duchess, he assembled his whole household in the great ante-chamber in the Rue de Varenne, the staff from the stables, the staff from the pantry, the staff from the kitchen, the housemaids and the scullions, and said to them: "I announce to you that my daughter has officially assumed the title of Duchesse d'Harcourt."—It was probably the same gesture as Louis XIV's in inviting the Duc d'Anjou to depart for Spain: *"Et moi, j'y consens."*

The Duc de Doudeauville liked fine equipages. His servants did not, as nowadays, come to ask whether he proposed to go out or stay at home. His horses were automatically put to, and after dinner he would be informed of the fact. "I shall

not want the carriage," he would sometimes reply. This passivity of servants has long ceased to exist.

When he went to Dampierre you may imagine with what joy father and daughter settled themselves in a great barouche which went at the head of a long train of other vehicles, in which the guests were accommodated. That procession of fine horses, fine carriages, and fair ladies used to drive in the verdant valley of Chevreuse, either towards Bonnelles, the Duchesse d'Uzès's place, or towards the Breteuil.

One summer's day—for at that time the magnates generally spent the summer on their estates—the Duchesse de Luynes found herself disagreeably incommoded by the dust thrown up into her face by an impertinent little one-horse chaise galloping ahead of her. She stopped the carriage, hailed the chaise and made one of her friends get down with the request that the impertinent offender take his proper place.

"You evidently do not know that it is the Duchesse de Luynes in that carriage?"

"The Duchesse de Luynes? You can tell

her . . ." and he used the famous French word of five letters.

Dampierre was truly the most beautiful seat in the outskirts of Paris and certainly that which was inhabited with the most *éclat*. No one at that time could compete with Yolande de Luynes. Her birth, her illustrious friendships, her fortune and the historical glamour of the fine château of Dampierre formed an inimitable whole.

She lost her husband in '70. Theatrical in her grief, the child-widow went out by night with a lantern to seek her husband's corpse on the field of battle. Nor did this act of hers pass unnoticed.

A little court soon formed about this young woman who was at once so reserved and so imperious and who kept such brilliant state in the château of Dampierre. All the dethroned Bourbons visited the faithful Royalist in rotation, and the magnates of Europe came to hunt from her house. The silk gown of Monseigneur Veye de Veya, pronotary apostolic at the court of Vienna, rustled repeatedly at Dampierre; there Carlos, King of Portugal, was regally fêted; Marie of Teck, now Queen of England, spent a whole sum-

mer there. Yolande de Luynes had a great predilection for the English and drew them to her.

If the Duchesse de Luynes loved ceremonial majesty, she was also given to laughter and gaiety with her intimate friends. She organized charades and parlour games, which have now gone out of fashion, but in which everyone then gladly took part; for she knew how to make her entourage eminently agreeable: delicious Yvonne de Contades, now Marquise de Montboissier, and her brothers Antoine and Jean de Contades; the beautiful X . . . , for whom the men competed with gold; and another lovely lady, the Comtesse F . . . , daughter of an Austrian, who always kept a frightful Hun accent: "How iss your aund Aclaë totay?"

Aglaé d'Archiac, my father's first cousin, lived at Mauvières, at the gates of Dampierre, and came every day to pay her respects to Yolande. She was very beautiful, with red hair like a helmet, and apparently when she and my father walked the streets together everyone turned round as they passed. Aglaé was never seen anywhere except at Dampierre. She had a jealous husband who had

succeeded in isolating her, and she lived entirely in her family circle.

The canal at Dampierre preserves the rings of Mrs. Standish, which she lost out rowing and never found again. Madame Standish, a Frenchwoman who had married an Englishman and was called "Mrs." was a queen of fashion. After elaborating incredible toilettes she would say indifferently, "My maid did all this." With her coiffure done to perfection after whole mornings spent in arranging her plaits, what must she think of the Gillette razors which promenade about the napes of present-day necks? She lived at Cowes during the summer, in her pretty "Egypt House," receiving French visitors for the regatta. My father once wrote us a letter from the Isle of Wight, which began thus: "If fire breaks out at Mangé, do this and this and that . . ." at last he concluded this terrifying letter: "Fire broke out in the middle of the night at Madame Standish's with such fury that she had no time to get away. She remained hanging to the balcony outside her window until the flames were actually up to her; then she let herself drop from a great height on to a

mattress laid ready by the firemen. Her hands are badly burnt. Mr. Standish was able to get away from his room on the ground-floor. . . ."

The Comte and Comtesse de Brigode were faithful familiars at Dampierre. The Comtesse de Brigode, my aunt, was an accomplished leader of society and a delightful woman, known as "La Douce."

The Comtesse de Guerne (Mimi de Guerne) was the musician of Dampierre. She sang in the drawing-room, she sang in the chapel. The *"Stabat Mater"* was her masterpiece. Her brother, the Comte de Ségur, used to play her accompaniments. He accompanied no one except his sister, and she never performed except with him: her voice was like a singing fountain. They confessed to me that they only knew seven musical people in France: "Ourselves and five others." They paid no attention to any but vocal music and doubtless preferred the *Pardon de Ploërmel* to *Pelléas*. Happy, thrice happy, those who have heard Madame de Guerne sing.

Comte Arnaud de Gramont often came down to Dampierre as a young man; so did Alexandre

de Gabriac, that Parisian so well known to Parisians, and Boni de Castellane and countless other young men, friends of Honoré de Luynes.

Honoré de Luynes was the intimate friend and the very incarnation of Philippe d'Orléans, and in death they were not divided.

With its soft tinkling the fountain of Dampierre must have lulled many a dream of restored kingship conjured up by the Duchesse de Luynes and her confidants.

The present Duchesse de Luynes, more practically minded (since she is the great-granddaughter of La Veuve Clicquot), has silenced the fountain.

All these great French historical names are like the bright skin of a fruit which is gradually losing its juice, its succulence, its flesh in order to become merely light and decorative like a colocynth. But happy circumstances—a lot of pesetas, for instance, or a great mind—can in a twinkling bring back to the husk the juice it lacks: then you discover how good the fruit is.

From her windows Yolande looked out upon the great fleur de lys in many-coloured flowers

which adorned one façade of the château. Beyond it the park rolled away with its canal and other artificial waters; foliage shut in the horizon of that beautiful spot which Louis XIII had originally given to his favourite d'Albert, because he excelled at taming falcons and perhaps other things as well. D'Albert was made Duc de Luynes and married Marie de Rohan. When the latter became a widow, she took for her second husband the Duc de Chevreuse, by whom however she had no children; the head of the Luynes family accordingly goes by the alternative titles of Duc de Luynes and Duc de Chevreuse.

Many sides of history are represented in the Dampierre archives. Extremely copious, they comprise treasures hitherto unexplored. The celebrated *Guirlande de Julie* is there.

The Duchesse Yolande's father-in-law was a distinguished archaeologist and a connoisseur on the art of his day. He commissioned Monsieur Ingres to paint some most interesting frescoes (which for a long time remained concealed behind a curtain, because of the nudes!), also Sicart to make a quartersize reproduction of the Parthenon Mi-

nerva. That polychrome Minerva adorns the great saloon of state.

It was there that the Duchesse de Luynes gave a luncheon to a hundred guests at small tables on the day of her daughter's wedding with the Duc d'Ayen. That lunch made an impression on me, because, in some sort, it was my first contact with the Royalist society of that time. I was not yet even a débutante, but that did not prevent my having a good time at the lunch, where I was put next to Monsieur de Rambuteau, a Burgundian with a fiery face and ditto heart. My sixteen years exhilarated him. To me he seemed very old, but his attentions were not unpleasant. He remarked that he had the head of a Roman emperor. "Yes, of Vespasian," was the retort. (Monsieur de Rambuteau's father, a prefect at the time of the Empire, had taken the same interest as the Emperor Vespasian in curing the bladder-complaints of his day.)

The Duc de Chartres presided at that luncheon. He rose for the toast of the young couple. I feared a speech, but he confined himself to saying: "I drink to the health of the Duc and Duchesse

d'Ayen." The Duc de Chartres was always glad to drink to anything.

I have never seen Dampierre again since that distant day.

Not only was I no Royalist, but I even paraded a considerable preference for the Republic, based on a reasoned conviction: that long-drawn sighing for a bygone state of things seemed to me ridiculous if it were sincere and, if feigned, a blameworthy pretext for self-isolation in a Tower of Ivory. The Republic, it must be granted, has never allowed outsiders to come too near to the Loaves and Fishes. The Duchesse de Luynes was, later, greatly shocked by the anti-Royalist attitude of myself and Monsieur de Clermont-Tonnerre.

She invited us to Dampierre on one occasion: we happened to be engaged that particular day.

Imperious Aunt Yolande never forgave us.

V

CANNES BEFORE THE ENGLISH INVASION

THE DUCHESSE DE LUYNES USED TO COME TO Paris for a few weeks in spring, no longer; for she well knew how extremely hard it is in that city to domineer except in one's own house. Everyone's sphere of influence is pretty restricted in Paris, as it is immediately infringed by the next person's sphere of influence. As children we were compelled to go and say How do you do to her in her plush drawing-room in the Cité Varenne. Those functions were deadly.

I admire Yolande de Luynes for having so well divined the rites which maintain glamour. She loved travel, for instance, but when she sailed for America she saw to it that this event seemed of importance, since *she* was the traveller. Her secretary had orders to communicate to a list of friends the stages of her journey. My father received a telegram and read it aloud to us: "The Duchesse

de Luynes has safely crossed the Rocky Mountains." We were overcome with admiration.

Yolande had cleverly selected Cannes for the theatre of her winter activities, as Dampierre was for her summer activities.

She occupied a pretty villa, the Villa Luynes, on the hill to the right of the harbour, and was the most fêted and omnipotent person in Cannes. The same means certainly never fail to impress the crowd. She used to drive herself through Cannes with teams of little ponies and had the talent of always being the centre of a family-party as large as it was important. On the other side of the road her father likewise had a large villa with a magnificent garden.

Yolande used her widowhood, recalled by the mauve tints of her toilette, as a pretext for never going out after dinner, which gave her much prestige and compelled others to come to her. There was a reception at the Villa Luynes every night.

In the afternoon the Duchess would make excursions on a grand scale, towards Antibes, to Elen's Rock, according to the Dampierre plan, the guests following in humbler conveyances. From

time to time she went to the Villa Soleil, at the lower end of her gardens, which she had let to Madame de Bañuelos, the widow of a Spanish ambassador, whose two daughters Tonita and Mariquita were her great friends. Tonita painted very well. She was a pupil of Chaplin's and did a portrait of my sister as a child worthy of her master. Aunt Yolande liked painting and drawing and painted very nicely herself. Long ago she had worked in the same studio as Tonita and Louise d'Hervey. In days gone by young ladies frequented studios. Tonita also played the guitar.

You will see that Madame de Luynes was never by herself. Her ladies of honour waited on her in relays; her family never left her; and so many visitors came and went that the gravel in front of her villa never ceased crunching beneath their revolving wheels.

When at the beginning of winter she went down to Cannes with her suite, from Saint-Raphaël onwards the station-masters used to come up to her compartment to say: "Madame la Duchesse, we shall be at Cannes in an hour," or, later, "Madame la Duchesse, we are just steaming into Cannes'

station." Ovation at the station. The head guard, his white cap in his hand, came up to pay his respects; fifteen persons with mimosa and anemones in their hands preceded her. I am convinced that the effects of the journey were instantaneously dissipated. Even today there are simple folk who say: "Cannes has greatly changed since the Duchesse de Luynes's time."

. . . My brother Armand having caught bronchitis, Doctor Albert Robin ordered him South, and my father and mother took the Villa des Tours at Cannes. But the November rains splashing on the palm trees depressed my father, who missed his hunting and the opera. So after they had settled us in comfortably, my mother and he made their way back to Paris, demanding a daily telegram which they often received in the form of: *"Turks well."*

The winter passed with no incident beyond one frightful discovery: we were covered with fleas, a present from the gardener's daughter. Only my brother, who was a little fastidious then, escaped.

Luckily I had short hair: it had been cut because of a "growing-fever." I should have liked to keep my little golden curls, but in those days short hair was considered in terribly bad taste and, sadly, I had to let mine grow.

At the end of winter my governess took typhoid. So my freedom was absolute, with neither parents nor instructors. I sent housekeepers to the right-about and, for the first time in my life, experienced the pleasantness of life. All the morning I wandered about a garden which seemed infinite to me, gliding between trees, chewing eucalyptus leaves, having a bite at the green lemons or ripe oranges, tormenting the goldfish in the pond. I discovered smells and colours, the sparkling of the sea and the azure of the sky, and with surprise experienced hitherto undiscovered joys. There were new ones every morning. The beauty of the violet burst upon me like a melody; the irises and anemones ravished me. Sometimes I ran cactus-spines into my hand, but what did that matter? The villa was covered with bougainvilleas and tiny little yellow roses such as I have never seen since. I also liked to climb the highest tower and

spy out whether strangers were perambulating the walks. Then, a latter-day Joan of Arc, I would swoop down on them and drive the English forth from my fairy garden in spite of the alliaceous outcries of the porter with his eye on a tip.

In the afternoon we went for walks in the direction of the harbour. The monotonous indolence of those spring afternoons was oppressive. At the Flower Market there remained nothing but old stalks and trodden petals. The little *place* was empty; the Hotel Splendid which, with its flanking of palms, dominated that little *place* had formerly been the theatre, well chosen because of its air of Italian opera, of a drama of jealousy. The sailors were sitting on boats, dangling their bare feet and smoking pipes. Everything seemed to be drowsing. Nothing is more mournful than the off-hours of luxurious pleasure-resorts, and the afternoon is always the dead point of idle days. I almost used to run a mild temperature with boredom on those walks, awaiting impatiently the moment when we should be back at my beautiful villa, whose great, rather moorish rooms, welcomed us so warmly

with good tea and tamarind jam and comfortable reading under the lamp.

For my New Year's present I had asked for a score of classics and read some of them: *The Adventures of Ulysses, Graziella* and *Le Génie du Christianisme* peopled my garden with heroes and heroines, who alone seemed to me worthy of it. I read and re-read the story of *Graziella* twenty times. The jumble of Chateaubriand's descriptions loosed my imagination, and I knew the intoxication of books. In the evening the English governess played Chopin with arms too short.

We often used to go to aunt Yolande, who had promised to look after us. She was charming to me, and let me sit on her knee. My father snubbed us all the time from educational motives. We were always "ugly" and "stupid" and had become convinced of it. When I went to the Villa Luynes I sat on my hands and hid my feet under the chair, for my father always kept saying: "Your great feet . . . and your great hands . . ." Aunt Yolande encouraged me: "Don't sit so queerly," and would say nice, flattering things.

I had unlimited admiration for her daughter, Lily de Luynes, who was then what is called a "fast" young girl, because she played tennis very well and danced ravishingly. She was ideally beautiful and looked like an Egyptian goddess. Enveloped in a white ostrich boa and taking her walks beneath the mimosa and palms of Cannes, she alone seemed worthy of my beautiful fairy garden. Her very disdain and perpetual silence added to the glamour of her. During a drive one day, one of her friends told a scatological anecdote and, behold, our goddess roaring with laughter and capping it with a similar story about colic! That event seemed to make her more human and more accessible.

Ferdinand, King of Bulgaria, nearly married her. She held a court of young men, who were very attentive and very much in love, waiting impatiently for her to marry so that they might cuckold her husband. They were extremely disappointed; for the fast, flirtatious young girl became an exceptionally devoted wife. She never left her husband and, when he had his twenty-eight days' duty at Rambouillet, she took up her quar-

ters in the local inn to keep him company. He bowed his neck to this yoke with all the more pleasure for having lived a gay enough life as a very young man. All's well that ends well and the Duc and Duchesse de Noailles can really be cited as the most devoted couple in Paris.

Then my father and mother came back to Cannes. They brought with them my aunt de Brigode, who read Loti on a *chaise longue*. From that moment my garden no more belonged to me. Along *my* walks I beheld perambulating grown-ups laden with parasols, scarves and sashes, who looked at nothing and entertained one another solely with their own affairs. The Prince of Wales had arrived at Cannes. He had played baccarat at such and such a villa, he had lost, he had not paid. . . . Amid sighs Elisabeth de Ligne would tell of her quarrels with the Prince de Ligne, who was a severe and jealous husband. Charles de La Rochefoucauld was dancing attendance that year on dazzling Estelle Ramsay.

Among my parents' guests there was a strange young woman, dressed in a precious and original manner, who astonished me. She seemed to like my

garden and would look at the flowers through a vast monocle, uttering exclamations in a strongly pronounced foreign accent. She egged her hosts on to get up theatricals at their villa: "I *feel* I could act Frou-Frou." Her husband, the Comte Fleury, shrugged his shoulders.

Mr. and Mrs. Meredith Howland were the only Americans in Cannes admitted to the intimacy of the villas which set the "tone." These villas all belonged to French people. Although Cannes had, so to speak, been founded by an Englishman, Lord Brougham, the English were looked on as strangers, to whom however one was very happy to be *at home.*

I can still recall Lady Brougham, a red-haired Englishwoman with a wasp's waist, who never relinquished her fan and simpered a good deal when talking to my father. She had a very keen taste for all that has to do with love; nor did she fear its results; for her garden was populated by a dozen children. The eldest girl had just married, and the last born was still in the perambulator. Lady Brougham's vocabulary was expressive, if restricted. Of some she would say: "Quite a high-

stepper," and of others: "Poor dear, poor dear." A wide avenue of palm-trees lighted by luminous globes led to her house.

Twilight at Cannes was something exquisite. The feverish stir of the closing day, the scent of flowers and the artificiality of that town without suburbs or factories formed a complex, rare combination, reserved for a few privileged persons; those villas scattered in those immense gardens, sheltered nothing but indolence. At Cannes everything indicated idleness, down to the rhythmical trot of the horses beating in time to the inertia of the fair ladies wintering there. The speedy motor car always gives a busy tang to the atmosphere of a place and does away with *"la promenade,"* word and thing.

The Grande-Duchesse de X . . . was also one of the star turns of Cannes. She complicated the customary program of her pleasures by going out to disport herself on the Ile Saint-Honorat with some sailor or other from the harbour. If he satisfied her, she gave him a good tip.

"Would you believe it, she only gave me fifty francs, the bitch!"

Like the Grande-Duchesse I too loved the Lérin isles, but the pleasure I took in them was pure: it consisted of picnics arranged with the children and the English governesses of the neighbourhood.

How much of this scintillation remains? Nothing. All that past is dead ten times over. Not only are most of the people dead, but also their style of life, of dress, of thought, of sentiment and of speech. A different race has supplanted them. The gardens of Cannes are now sunk in the past like the *Titanic* beneath the waves.

VI

SAINTE CLOTILDE

IN THE SHADOW OF THE TWO POINTED STEEPLES of Sainte Clotilde's a special atmosphere enveloped me.

From the Rue Saint Dominique as far as the Invalides, the Princesse de Sagan had sacrificed that part of her garden for Chatenay to put up a row of white little town-houses, similar to one another and lacking the great double gates of the older sort. She let them to her acquaintances. My father and mother took the one which formed the corner between the Rue Saint Dominique and the Esplanade. I remember the rumbling of the great omnibus which used to make the house shake right up to the second floor where my room was. It went by every evening between nine and ten o'clock, and I used to follow it on its progress—shaking the tumbledown tenements at number 35, where our little dressmaker lived, causing also the house of

the d'Albuferas to rock, then that of the d'Haussonvilles.

My existence was bounded in a narrow quadrilateral by somewhat hostile houses.

First there were the people of the Rue de Constantine. The Duc de Mouchy was our immediate neighbour. I knew when he had passed along the pavement, because he left it all fragrant. He used to call me "My dear little cousin" and place my hand on his heart or, rather, on the fine cloth of his frock-coat while I studied his fat white neck, which made its appearance between a crown shaped beard and a collar opening low in the front.

The old Marquise de Biron lived half-way down the Rue de Constantine. She was on the best of terms with the Archbishop and was busy with good works from morning to night. Her granddaughters, the "Bironettes" all had the same way of talking—and the same unwearying politeness. Very pretty as they were, they knew how to dress at an early age. These little Bironettes consisted of the four d'Harcourts, the three Saint-Sauveurs and a Ligne.

We used to play on the Esplanade des Invalides

with these little girls from our quadrilateral, to which we added two extensions, the d'Haussonvilles and the Lanjuinais', who lived at number 31, Rue Cambon, where Chanel's, the dressmaker's, now is.

The Lanjuinais were cousins of the d'Haussonvilles, who were cousins of the d'Harcourts, who were cousins of the Saint-Sauveurs. This close corporation used to be called *"les cousines."* They walked about and played with me on Thursdays and Sundays, allowing me to escort them as far as their gate, but they never asked me to tea. I was greatly upset at seeing this bevy of little girls gaily disappear into one of the houses, leaving me gently on the doorstep. I was sensitive at that time, perhaps a little softened by my catechisms. I felt myself isolated, my grief found vent after dinner, and I cried so loudly while I was going to bed that my mother's German maid, who had the next room, came into mine saying: "You must nod gry like zat!" Her curling-pins were so ridiculous that my thoughts were given a new turn. I pondered over the situation and thought: "I must find other playmates."

From that day I went to the Tuileries gardens to play at prisoner's base with small boys, especially Gabriel de La Rochefoucauld, who became my cavalier. We swopped scapularies and medals, since we were going to the same catechism-classes preparatory to our confirmation. He often wrote me charming notes, which I would dutifully show my mother. This good-looking little boy went on writing and made a name with a novel, *L'Amant et le Médecin,* which had an enormous success on its first appearance. Stanislas de Castellane, later member for Le Cantal, was another of my friends of Sainte Clotilde's.

I learnt easily and was called "the theologian." I went bald-headed at this preparation for communion and made a serious attempt at perfection. The clergy of Sainte Clotilde commanded a wonderful zeal and patience; they knew how to carry us along and inflame us with a quasi-mystical ardour. The bells of Sainte Clotilde could be heard as far as the Esplanade. The Rue Las-Cases, where the chapel for catechisms was, was only two steps from our house: so these pious exercises made no noticeable break in the work of the schoolroom.

Our town education allowed for no kind of sport. My principal exercise accordingly took the form of terrific drubbings, which I administered to my brothers and my sister and which, I may add, they returned—and I think those regular battles were a necessity to us. Kicking in the stomach was the only thing ruled out. I sometimes had handfuls of my sister's hair in my hands and I never had clean knees before I was sixteen. For three months, however, I spared brothers and sister.

My first communion was all that could be wished. Never did a purer or more ardent heart approach the Holy Table. Nevertheless, if I must speak the truth, the day was a disappointment. The promised joys remained in abeyance. I had the impression that all the effort had been made on *my* side. When night fell, tired and nervy as I was after long hours of emotion and pious constraint, the realization came to me, quite clearly, that I had reached a summit, on which I was unable to remain, and I quietly returned to my ordinary state without worrying further about religious debate. I was decidedly not touched by Grace.

To the good priest who asked me to confess

myself and communicate every week I retorted with a categorical "No," and three years after my first communion I begged my mother to excuse me from the "catechism of perseverance"; and it was with the deadliest boredom that I followed the different religious ceremonies which I was compelled to attend.

Already on the evening of my first communion, as I was going downstairs at the Rue de Constantine, in full fig with my white veils flowing behind, my brother Armand, following on my heels, trod on them and tore them. I turned. Biff! a box on the ear. My father, who was waiting for us on the landing, said: "Aren't you ashamed of yourself, Lily, the very day of your confirmation!"

From this intercourse with Sainte Clotilde I nevertheless kept certain severe religious practices. In December we used to sing hymns before a miniature manger lit up with candles and, in May, in front of a little altar to the Virgin, which was painted white and garlanded with forget-me-nots. In March we used to say a prayer in a side chapel dedicated to Saint Joseph. As we were going away from eleven o'clock mass one Sunday and

were directing our footsteps towards that little chapel, a walking stick gave me a gentle tap on the calf. It was my father, who asked angrily:

"What are you going to hide at the back of the church for?"

"To pray to Saint Joseph."

"Tommy-rot."

I was glad to be rid of this duty.

I had a great many faults, I know, but one virtue had been instilled into us, and that so deeply that I have never departed from it: obedience to our parents. To argue, to debate any one of their decrees or even the least of their wishes never crossed my mind. I felt as if we belonged to them, bodily, with all our worldly possessions, and that it would continue to be so to the end of their days or mine. I passed sharp, ironical judgments on their acquaintance, but they remained immune from my criticisms.

My mother was goodness itself, and with her our relations were perfectly comradely, whereas my father filled us with such terror that when in 1924 I introduced to him my future son-in-law, the Comte de Berlaymont, the latter noticed that

my voice sank and quavered—to which he afterwards amazedly drew my attention. My brother Louis René was sometimes struck dumb, and my brother Armand's temperature used to go up a couple of degrees after a visit from his father when he was ill. My sister de Noailles alone held her own with him. When I analysed the reasons for this funk, I discovered in myself what are medically designated "infantile impressions," a result produced no doubt by the sound of a voice so peculiarly hard and metallic in its resonance that everyone jumped on hearing it. Even our favourite dog Frisky would creep under the wardrobe when he was told: "The Duc's coming."

I did less theology, but more work, beginning to take a serious interest in my studies. I had a passion for English and swotted at it with Miss Johnson, who used to finish up an explanation of the beautiful poetry of Lord Byron by a rapid readjustment of her false teeth. I was beginning to understand the meaning of texts and words and, guided by the spirit of mischief, liked to insist on

certain passages. "What is a paramour, Miss Johnson?" A firm grasp of the denture and then she threw out this lapidary phrase: "A wife that is and ought not to be." I harassed her no further. We read the poems of Sir Walter Scott and that charming book *Misunderstood,* over which the little girls of my generation used to dissolve in tears. I began to read Dickens and through his novels, Puritan and fairy-like at the same time, I really learnt English.

Literature was beginning to impress me, and when Monsieur Othenin d'Haussonville, the father of my little friends of the Esplanade, became a member of the Académie Française, I went up to them where they were sitting on a bench and complimented them heartily.

"Madeleine, you must not make spelling-mistakes; the daughter of an Academician can't do that," her big Irish nurse used to say to her.

We, that is to say my sister and I, used to be asked to the sewing-party teas at Madame la Comtesse d'Haussonville's, who later became president of the French Red Cross. She had her headquarters in a little drawing-room at the back of her

flat from which, with the doors open, she could survey all the rooms. We used to sew and knit once a week for the poor, in the dining-room. From there I could see the visitors come in, among others the Duc de Chartres, for whom the Mesdemoiselles d'Haussonville used slightly to rise from their chairs.

Madame d'Haussonville had a very grand manner, a fine figure and a hook-nose. Her manner of welcoming you was at once very affable and inclined to banality, in the style of the conversation affected by sovereigns. She knew everyone's Christian name, used to ask how everyone was, but her large, cold eye seemed to take no part in the effusiveness of her gesture and her speech. She often declared that her four daughters were too much for her, the two elder girls compelling her to sacrifice her evenings in taking them out and the third and fourth filling up her afternoons with their lectures and catechism respectively. Nevertheless, she was never seen more than once a year at Monsieur Prat's lectures.

My father dared not refuse his permission when she asked if she might take me to the Hippodrome

with her daughters Mathilde and Madeleine. To her I owe that unique evening's entertainment of my childhood, when for the first time I saw the lights of Paris by night. They surprised my eyes as much as the aurora borealis does that of travellers. Besides the light of the sun I only knew domestic lamps and short flames emitted by gas-burners; now suddenly I was bathed by flashing arc-lamps and the rays of limelight, which threw alternate blue and livid lights on to the immense sandy arena from which there arose that smell of stables and of musk peculiar to circuses. A troika-race was punctuated by bells, and I rediscovered those liturgical chimes very many years later in the stations of the trans-Siberian railway. Russian was beginning to enter into our Parisian amusements. Shadow and light intersected sharply; colour was garbed in a new sort of light which decomposed it, since the violet of the solar spectrum, and the golden light of gas or oil were replaced by livid hues which compelled the women to daub themselves with crude make-up.

This new aspect of light had a prodigious effect on me, and it gave me pleasure to follow it up

wherever I saw it. I believe that it decomposes living organisms just as it decomposes colours, affecting the mind and creating the race of "noctambulists," who warm themselves at electric light as others do at the sun. When I came across that kind of lighting in painters, notably in Degas, I was thrilled. Has it not called into being a whole school of painting, of which he is the supreme master?

Monsieur d'Haussonville was often absent-minded and, twiddling his monocle, followed the thread of his thoughts, which were always concerned with his literary work and the records concerning his grandmother, Madame de Staël, that he was digging out of the archives of Coppet.

Madame de Martel asked him nicely why he had not invited her to his last ball.

"I have daughters, Madame."

Madame de Martel became Gyp and, in the guise of novels, published pamphlets obviously aimed at the d'Haussonvilles. The Comtesse d'Haussonville endured this onslaught of human

malignity with so indifferent, so abstracted and so icy an air, that the arrows merely glanced off such adamantine armour. She was, moreover, protected by the well-filled ranks of a large family.

She played her part of president of the French Red Cross with as much energy as zeal, and, although no longer a young woman, in her exemplary punctuality never allowed a day to pass without looking in at the Rue François I, the headquarters of her organization, and visiting hospitals or sanitary units of different sorts; in this arduous task she was assisted by her brother, the Vicomte d'Harcourt.

To the day of her death, accordingly, the fair Pauline continued the most important person in the French *"gratin."*

What does this word *"gratin"* mean?

My old friend Monsieur de Rambuteau used to say: "There's the *gratin* which . . . and the *gratin* which does not . . ." which interpreted is—that which washes and that which does not wash. This parallel might be protracted to infinity.

The purest *gratin* inhabits the region bordered on the north by the Seine, on the south by the

quartier Saint-François-Xavier, in the east by the Rue des Saints-Pères, in the west by the Avenue de La Bourdonnais. Sainte Clotilde is its centre. One of the wings of the Académie Française is bound up with it.

The men of the *gratin* are the only Frenchmen who know how to dress and, according to the judgment of courtesans, it would seem that they too know best how to make love. When Félix Faure died in grotesque circumstances, Edmond de Lambertye, a club-man of experience, said with a chuckle: "It is plain that he wasn't used to it!" The poor President had received a lady too soon after his luncheon, emptied it over his victim's head and died.

The ladies of the *gratin* who, in their old age, tend to look like housekeepers, effect in the afternoon the ornament of obsolete finery. But they took their revenge in the evening with their fine shoulders and diamonds.

What governs the *gratin* is the certainty that it is really superior, despite all appearances to the contrary. The families belonging to it are all intermarried and form a compact mass. They take the

word of command from certain fuglemen: "R . . . has said, O . . . thinks, A . . . declares."

The *gratin* is a product of the nineteenth century, in absolute opposition to the eighteenth, whose liberty of thought it has banished together with its free and easy manner, its love of actuality, its artistic discernment and immediate contact with life. Although the majority of the families which make up this group go back far beyond the Revolution, they have re-modelled themselves from top to bottom and taken their guiding principles from the French hierarchy of the middle of the nineteenth century: Père Didon, Monseigneur Dupanloup, Monsieur de Falloux, etc.

Since the war the *gratin* has undergone important modifications. But it has a special vitality, is more fecund than other well-to-do social groups in the country.

The *gratin* is further distinguished by the fact that it is not hospitable. I know of families belonging to it who are very wealthy and who yet have never offered a glass of orangeade to a fellow man; to invite him to a little music would be a scandal. Nevertheless, this milieu produces *pro*

rata as much intelligence and work as the other social strata of France.

Among the most notorious fugitives from this narrow society Rose d'Avaray deserves mention. As quite a young woman she amazed the *quartier,* and the echoes of her extravagance even reached the Rue Constantine. My father used often to talk about her. He took me skating to the Tir aux Pigeons. Three rows of men surrounded a woman who was a head taller than they. "That must be Rose d'Avaray," I exclaimed, "for she is black with men." My father introduced me to Rose and repeated that phrase to her. She burst out laughing, made me skate with her and brought me home in her carriage.

One spring morning, as I was walking down the Boulevard Saint-Germain, I saw coming towards me a dazzling creature with a face as pink as a bullfinch. She looked like one of Rubens's women, taller, stronger, more splendid and more aureoled with gold than any other. She advanced with a triumphal air down the middle of the pavement, smiling at the sun, the street, and the men, who all

turned round as she passed. "That's Rose d'Avaray!" I exclaimed to my governess.

Rose de Mercy-Argenteau was the daughter of parents correct and meticulous to such a degree that in Monsieur de Mercy's budget there was an appropriation for the weekly cab which was to take Madame de Mercy to confession. Rose showed herself so exuberant that Monsieur d'Avaray's family almost compelled her to separate from him. She turned courtesan and an expensive one! Lovers came in at the doors and jumped out at the windows. The husband insinuated himself among them. I do not know how that infernal round ended. When she was first married an honest cousin of hers said, with a toss of her head: "Rose, I'll go bail for her!" It is a pity that such great beauty should serve merely as fuel to some drunken orgy.

Another personage which struck my childish gaze was General Boulanger's. I have learnt since that he was not very clever and hadn't in the least degree the qualities required of the head of a state, but he must have had *something* since he made

le Boulangisme. That something—fluid, aura, glamour, what you will—was already sufficient to make the street-boys turn their heads and people study him. And when the Minister for War rode down the Rue Saint-Dominique on his black horse I too followed him as far as I could: "General Boulanger is going past!"

The inhabitants of Paris were beginning to watch him and think about him, and the Boulanger movement gradually became stronger. I only know of this retrospectively; but certainly there was a moment, an hour, a day, in which Boulanger had France in the hollow of his hand. "Midnight! we are saved!" said Constans, the Minister for Home Affairs. There had then been danger. Precisely that strikes me as the most enigmatical thing about the Boulanger adventure.

At that time, having often admired General Boulanger on his fine horse, I sported the little Boulangist rosette as a souvenir of the fine soldier. An artless time, when a soldier securely mounted on a good charger could stir people's pulses! There are times when the French have minds of nursery-maids.

But someone emerged from that abortive revolution: Maurice Barrès. His name became a household word, and I learnt to pronounce it long before I had read a single page he had written.

While that young man from Lorraine was practising politics in the Latin Quarter, a little girl, who later was to reveal to him the glamour of poetry and the East, was going to children's balls in the Quartier de l'Etoile. I met Anna de Brancovan in the Avenue Friedland, at the Baronne James de Rothschild's, who was giving a tea-party for her daughter's friends. Anna had great brown ringlets framing a round, colourless face. She was already voluble in her talk, and we made a circle round her to hear her tell of Constantinople and its narrow alleys given over by night to howling dogs. I conceived an admiration for the solemn, imperious child, an admiration which has never lessened.

. . . We used to spend August at Deauville in the Villa Camélia, rented from the Baronne de Poilly for nine thousand francs. Prices generally

were on that scale. An elegant close society disported itself there and was only visible of a morning, on the pier.

While I was digging holes in the sand I saw go by the great folk who were displaying their finery to the midday sun—or rather, I heard the nurses admiring them. Among those who did all they could, by fair means or foul, to attract the gaze of mankind was the Princesse de Sagan. One afternoon, on the pier at Trouville, I saw pass by on a large decked fishing-smack or tiny yacht three silhouettes arrayed in nautical gear, with straw hats and square collars. They were the Princesse de Sagan, the Marquise de Galliffet, in red like a bit of flag, and the Comte François de Gontaut-Biron. They were sailing out in the direction of the sea, energetically waving their handkerchiefs; but I fancy that, their effect registered, they were quickly home again.

The Duc de Morny too, in a rakish hat, attracted attention. The young actress from the Comédie Française who had done away with herself because he was leaving her, wove a legend

round him, and he benefited also by the prestige of his father, the celebrated Morny who had called Deauville into being and set up race-courses. The Morny of my childhood was a thin little man with an impertinent air, who looked rather like a miniature Russian. His wife and another lady having quarrelled about him, someone exclaimed: "How comic to see those two ladies fighting over a bone!"

Poor Morny was ruined and, as in Marcel Boulenger's excellent book I read again of the pomp and power which Napoleon III's minister enjoyed, I find it painful to think of the penury in which his children now have to struggle. Towns are as ungrateful as individuals. If the Duc de Morny had really been a great politician, he would have sacrificed to the nation's interests the multifarious and useless distractions which dissipated his strength. Is he not the incarnation of the Second Empire with its frivolous, ephemeral character? He left his children doubtfully provided for and accustomed to extravagance.

I have seen the great Morny's widow at Deauville, after her second marriage to the Spaniard

Sesto—a thin, upright old blonde, always enveloped in cigarette smoke. She transmitted her frivolity to her sons, who could not bring themselves to put on mourning for her: they called it Cesse-tot mourning.

Serge de Morny, a relation of my father's, had fits of despair. On account of some amorous misadventure he threw himself out of the window—a ground-floor window happily. When he went to the club, Louis de Laigle apostrophized him: *"Et bien, mon vieux, tu as voulu nous montrer que tu descends des Croisés."*

The Duc de Morny's daughter, the Marquise de Belbeuf, is still alive. Well known by the name of Missi, she has taken the title of Marquis de Mora and dresses like a man; she may easily be taken for one, since the years sometimes do away with sex-distinctions. Old age having come upon her, she flees from what aforetime she sought and would like to be spared the enthusiastic importunities of pretty ladies. Was it her wish to underline a paradox of her father's, who once, at a dinner at Émile de Girandin's, made "the bold and original apology for lesbianism, that in it, he held,

woman achieved refinement, perfection—the fulfilment of her being" (*Journal des Goncourt*)?

My playmates on the sands were, among others, the Borniols and the d'Erlangers, whose parents had bought the Villa Morny. When Baron d'Erlanger left Deauville, the Hôtel Royal was put up on its site.

Among the elegant frequenters of the beach, two young women, Madame Pallain and her sister Madame Cochery, kept themselves aloof. They were distinguished by a certain rather remote grace. André Pallain was a companion of mine at play and in the water. For some reason or other a cabal was formed against him, and the children on the sands refused to admit him to their society, alleging that he was a Republican. He had a nice voice and plenty of go, and I completely fell for him. I followed him into his exile—for which I incurred general blame. After a little time, however, I arranged a big tea-party at the Villa Camélia in order to bring about a reconcilement—and it was Madame Pallain who refused to let her son come!

We threw ourselves on our knees in the sand: she melted, and the reunion was effected in the best possible circumstances.

My father and mother tired of Deauville, and it was many years before I went there again.

VII

SMAIN

SMAIN! THE PET-NAME BY WHICH HER CHILDREN called her, in a language that they had invented and of which this syllable alone survives. The juxtaposition of the first two letters gave the word an aromatic, a spicy savour: an Asiatic poet of the sixteenth century might have written that the favourite of the Emperor of India had Smain for name.

On first meeting her Barbey d'Aurevilly exclaimed: "O Semiramis, whose son I should like to be!"

I only knew this marvellous Smain, in her decline; but there still remained sufficient beauty in and about her for me to imagine her in her splendour. She was living in the country, in heavy, melancholy retirement, drowsing by the fireside. If she woke up, like a cat stretching herself, her great, pale green eyes would light up for an in-

ward gaze, then once more she would let her pendulous cheeks fall down over her knitted shawl. Sometimes, through the cloud of innumerable cigarettes which she smoked unceasingly, she would appear like some ancient idol still gaily veneered.

If someone interested her enough to rouse her from her torpor, she would adorn herself. I have seen her come down in surprising costumes, her corpulence overflowing into velvet boleros, her beautiful hands laden with rings, a ton of rouge on her cheeks, and her hair, which remained black and abundant to the day of her death, piled up on the top of her head and falling down in ringlets.

"Smain, how beautiful you are today!"

Then she would talk a little as she puffed at her cigarette. And that old woman had the youngest and most bewitching voice I have ever heard, rich and resonant, though level in pitch and a little slow in the utterance. You remained captivated by that voice which had enchanted so many people.

Those who knew her in days gone by said that

the atmosphere emanating from her was aphrodisiacal. And I can well believe it.

"After tea, come into the lumber-room."

And I would go into an apartment, the physical limits of which were masked by a profusion of hangings, door-curtains, objects of all sorts, half-open presses overflowing with old stuffs and jewels, books strewn about, letters in piles. Black lap-dogs yapped. A great harp stood on the carpet. Smain struck a few chords and sang in a dead, but still pleasant, voice.

She showed me the manuscript of *Le Passant,* presented by François Coppée, with the song in Massenet's own hand; but she took good care not to open the envelopes containing the correspondence of Barbey d'Aurevilly, Ricart and many, many others.

Before dinner, Smain was wrapped in her own thoughts and, draped in a huge, bright blue burnous, paced the corridor, telling her rosary with one hand and holding a cigarette in the other. Her hair, a black, wavy mass, covered her shoulders. Her house was the image of herself. Warm and

comfortable, it was filled to bursting-point with *bibelots* of every sort, memorials of her past. They were excellent in their different kinds, for Smain was compact of taste. Even in the W. C.'s there was a collection of Gavarnis.

Smain gave herself up entirely to domestic cares, went to and fro between the farmyard and the vegetable-garden, and in the theatre built at the bottom of the park, where she had given performances of Sedaine, Marivaux and Maupassant, she was rearing pedigree-fowls which had won prizes at agricultural shows. The crowing of cocks rent the welkin at dawn. Smain's indignation could still be roused by her differences with her servants, Charles, Rose or Victor, but on the rest of her universe a rain of ashes had descended.

The old inspire pity in those who are not yet so, because the latter draw summary and inaccurate conclusions. They see their actual personalities imprisoned in a palsied body, with stiff limbs and clouded brain, and they swiftly pass over the imperceptible stages which have led up to such a condition. As a matter of fact, old people are rooted in the present, and their past falls away

from them like dead branches. The hollow, gnarled trunk of an old tree clings to the earth without giving a thought to the time when its leafy crown spread out luxuriantly beneath the blue of heaven, sheltering nests and the song of birds.

But if you tap the half-burnt log, sparks still fly from it. I amused myself in bringing a little light into Smain's eyes when I compelled her to call to mind the days of yore.

"You must have been much giddier than we are!"

"You're wrong, my pet; we led quieter, simpler and more regular lives than you do. On Mondays I went to the Opera, on Tuesdays to the Italiens and on Fridays to the Opéra-Bouffe; on Wednesdays I gave a dinner with a little reception afterwards for artists and writers, with a little music sometimes or theatricals, on Saturdays I gave another for Society, and sometimes there was dancing. The rest of the time I quietly stayed at home to see my friends. I didn't spend the whole day, as you do, running about in hotels and tea-shops and all those horrid public resorts. You spend breathless lives, you like expensive pleasures. When I

was a girl we used to go for donkey-rides in the Forest of Montmorency and eat picnic dinners; we were so happy that we could not break up the party. In the summer I used to go to Romilly and was bathing my face in the dew by six o'clock in the morning!"

Shadows and lights flitted through her eyes, her gaze drooped. She did not care to talk about the times which are no more.

When I was with her I borrowed cigarettes which I smoked with delight, and it is to Smain that I owe that agreeable habit.

She used to give me hearty kisses with her full, rather strong lips, which she was in no hurry to take from my cheek.

"If I had had grandchildren," she sighed, "it would have taken me out of myself."

She had nothing but quantities of nephews and nieces, who called her Aunt Annette.

Annette du Hallays-Coëtquen had a Breton father, descended from the Hallays-Coëtquens who were related to Chateaubriand. His mother traced

her descent from a West Indian creole. In Annette both these races were developed to the full. She had eyes the colour of a Breton strand and blood hot as that of the women of the tropics. Exotic and French, that double attraction now served, now harmed her.

At fourteen she was asked in marriage, but did not marry the Comte de Brigode until three years later. A widow straightaway, without restraints of any kind, she surrendered herself to the destiny vouchsafed her—to please and to charm.

For certain, not necessarily intellectual women artists and men of letters have a particular glamour. And at that glowing flame of beauty and vitality that was Smain many personalities gathered. Annette had a presentiment of their fame even before the event. Among the close friends of her earliest period were: Dr. Albert Robin, Paul Bourget, Jules Barbey d'Aurevilly (the *Connétable de lettres*), a young poet called François Coppée, Edmond de Polignac, Gallifet, Murat, the general public of the Second Empire mingling harmoniously with the writers, the artists, the musicians, —among others, the singer Capoul, who was be-

witching Paris with his Toulouse voice and setting a hairdressing fashion.

After a second marriage, to Baron de Poilly, and a second widowing, Smain belonged to no other coterie than that of her own choice. Her best friend was Judith Gautier, the daughter of Théophile Gautier, whose build was heavy as that of the Baroness. Smain gave performances of a play Judith had translated from the Chinese. All these people she would carry off to Folembray and entertain with theatricals; the Baronne de Poilly's theatre received a lustre from Paul Deschanel, walking in the footsteps of Le Bargy, him who was called "the little marvel," so clever and dandified at the same time was he.

Smain liked expensive holidays. She was hardly what might be called economical. What with Paris and villas at Aix-les-Bains and Deauville, debts accumulated which some day would have to be faced. One of her caprices was to have a little bungalow built for her at the Pré Catalan, where she would go out to tea on spring afternoons. In the days of horses the Bois was a long way

off. "Les Ramiers" has become a bicycle-shed.

How is it that youth and credit so often come to an end simultaneously? It certainly happened to the Baronne de Poilly, who one fine day had to retire to Folembray and live there quietly. It was just then that I got to know her, when she was setting off the remains of beauty and her generous charms with extravagant adornment. She used to wear clusters of grapes or garlands of tangerines in her hair, which rivetted my gaze for longer than politeness could have wished. But she still liked to draw attention to herself.

"I always see you as 'L'Africaine,'" old Baron de Ménard used indefatigably to tell her—which made her smile. Meyerbeer's opera-heroine can never have been more superbly incarnated. But I prefer to picture Smain in gentler effigy, as in the picture of Ricart's, that exquisite painter who is only just a little less great than the greatest. He was strongly attracted by Smain's beauty and painted very fine portraits of her and her children. I have a predilection for the little canvas in which he has been pleased to paint Smain's beautiful

hand holding a spray of roses, symbolical of her life, with the sweet-smelling petals interspersed by thorns.

Of the latter there were plenty to lacerate her.

All the bitterness in her nature, all the regrets for the splendours of yore were crystallized in a fierce hatred of her daughter-in-law, to whom she was at once victim and executioner: by tormenting her she revived her own daily tortures. Whatever she might do,—her daughter-in-law always remained twenty years younger than she, and it was in vain to reiterate phrases beginning "at our age." The eye was not deceived, all the less for my Aunt de Brigode's keeping a youthful silhouette by dint of methodical hygiene and daily exercise, while Annette became helpless with fat. She darted looks of hate when my poor aunt came up humbly: "How is your neuralgia, Smain?" and shrugged her shoulders at every word she said.

Moreover, men agree with Musset:

Quand j'ai passé par la prairie,

. . . . . .

J'y vis poindre une fleur nouvelle;
La plus jeune était la plus belle:

Annette saw her admirers forsaking her in order to bestow their homage upon her fair-haired daughter-in-law and never resigned herself to the sight. Barbey d'Aurevilly dedicated himself to a cult of my Aunt de Brigode:

"Si l'on pouvait donner son âme
Ainsi que l'on donne un portrait,
Ce n'est pas un portrait, Madame,
Qu' aujourd 'hui je vous offrirais,"

he wrote in his fantastic hand at the bottom of a picture which represents him wrapped in his famous cape. He sent her his books with dedications in three inks and moire bindings of two different shades.

I heard a great deal about Barbey d'Aurevilly, but I never met him.

My aunt took me to Mademoiselle Read's, whom Barbey d'Aurevilly called the White Angel in contradistinction to the Baronne de Bouglon, the Black Angel. In memory of d'Aurevilly, Mademoiselle Read lived in a perpetual odour of tomcats' urine.

That Norman's greatness, so it seems to me,

emerges distinctly from his books. As a very young woman, I read them with avidity, and they do not fade from the memory, with their characters who stir the soul as deeply as old Clos-Vougeot or the archæology of Normandy: the Abbé de la Croix-Jugan, Mademoiselle de Touffedelys, the Chevalier des Touches, the Vellini smoking her cigar on a heap of cordage.

The heroes of Barbey had the gift of repartee:

" 'It would appear, Sir, that you are cheating.' "

" 'That may be, Sir, but I allow no man to tell me so.' "

As a very old man, with his sight gone, Barbey was helping himself to chicken and putting down the pieces by the side of his plate. When his attention was drawn to the circumstance he said calmly:

"That is how it used to be eaten at Valognes when I was a boy."

To get the full effect of this retort you must superadd Barbey's tone of voice.

Paul Bourget can talk about d'Aurevilly better than any man.

When Bourget was elected to the Académie, my Aunt de Brigode rejoiced at the distinction her friend had gained. But the Baronne de Poilly could not even bear the word Académie. "The everlasting Académie," she would say contemptuously, even when no one had mentioned it.

And yet, with what profound affection did her son and her daughter-in-law allow her to domineer in a house which was no longer her own.

She died at Folembray in 1905.

During the war the château, lying in the centre of the German operations, housed von Kluck's general staff and afterwards another general. William II passed through Folembray in his armoured car, spent some days there and probably sat in Smain's place at table.

My Uncle de Brigode, proprietor of the Folembray glassworks and *maire* of the village, remained faithfully at his post during the whole of the invasion. A prisoner in his own house, he stayed there for nearly four years and, a few months before the armistice, was sent to Fourmies. The Germans blew up the Château of Folem-

bray, for no useful purpose of any kind, from mere motives of destruction, and they even disturbed the cemetery in which the bones of the Baronne de Poilly were at rest.

VIII

THE DAYS OF HORSES

SUDDENLY AT TWENTY YEARS I HAD THE SOUL OF La Fontaine's cobbler: money became, to me, a negligible quantity. Supersaturated with luxury, in contact with the wealthiest people in Paris, I was completely *blasée* about the way money was manipulated.

My father, the Duc de Gramont and my stepmother had bought from Comte Wladimir de Montesquiou-Fezensac a huge mansion at the corner of the Rue de Chaillot and the Champs-Élysées. Madame Jules Porgès, who coveted it, hesitated for two hours and lost it. The house consisted of a central block, fronted by a court-yard, and two wings, connected by means of three iron gates. The latter were surmounted by a pair of bronze savages, the speaking device of Monsieur Sauvage de Brantes, son-in-law to the Comte de Montesquiou. The central gates were only opened twice,

at an interval of twenty years, to permit the passage of my parents' hearses: my mother's in 1905, my father's in 1925. On grand reception-days, the carriages drove in at the first gate and out at the third.

Opposite the gates was a flight of several steps, sheltered by an awning and giving acess to a lofty portico supported by four columns. A sculptured fountain by Dalou adorned the back wall.

A double staircase starting from the portico occupied the central block. Two great Hubert Roberts, which had come from the Hôtel Luynes, relieved its walls with prospects of bridges and torrents. The left wing comprised the reception-rooms, aligned in a row at right angles to the Champs-Élysées: a large drawing-room, a ball-room, the smoking-room, the boudoir; in the right wing were the dining-room and the bedrooms, looking out on the Rue de Chaillot.

Our bedrooms were on the second floor overlooking this street and our schoolroom on the second floor overlooking the Champs-Élysées. We were forbidden to go along the coachmen's and servant's corridor connecting the two wings, so that by the

end of every day our shuttle-service between schoolroom and the other rooms represented a climb of a good twelve stories, of which our governess complained bitterly. My mother's boudoir was on the Champs-Élysées side of the house, and she was mostly to be found there.

This mansion was better designed for state than for intimacy. The pulsations of the house were condensed in the staircase, and that huge stone structure had a perpetually changing physiognomy, which was a source of pleasure to me. With the first warm days the stone took on a golden hue and a fresh odour, heightened by the perfume of the flowers disposed on corbels round about the fountain and the statue of Flora on the first-floor landing. During the dead season, stripped of its carpets, this part of the house became grey and clangorous; but in winter, under the flaming electricity and in the great heat of the stove, it assumed once more its agreeable, welcoming air. On gala-nights the staircase was resplendent with the liveried, powdered flunkies escorting the hordes of guests. When my father was displeased, the staircase resounded to his shouting, and after my

mother's death the house, except on festal occasions, often had an empty, deserted look.

To furnish this vast fabric there was, for several years, a considerable coming and going of workpeople, of upholsterers and dealers. My father and mother attended the big sales, that of the Earl of Essex, of Secrétan, etc., where they picked up any quantity of furniture, pictures, books, and valuable china. My mother had extremely reliable taste, which she got from her family, the Rothschilds always having been connoisseurs of the first order.

Objets d'art interested me, and I specialized in the study of pictures and old books, reading sale-catalogues, noting prices and haunting museums, exhibitions and book-shops. In an auspicious moment about that time I began a private collection of old books, many of which I bought at less than a hundred francs the volume. I often went to Leclercq's, at the corner of the Rue d'Alger, and especially to Madame Belin's on the Quai Voltaire. There she was, surrounded by her books of heraldry, her books of hours, her illuminated manuscripts—fingering them, breathing them in. Ma-

dame Belin is a celebrated bibliophile and a greater expert than any librarian. An extraordinary flair and love which she brings to her profession give her a rare kind of tang. The greatest bibliophiles in Paris are among her customers. One day an Englishman picked out 80,000 francs' worth of books, which he paid for in notes and carried away under his arm. Madame Belin's curiosity shadowed him in the guise of one of her clerks. It was Lord Salisbury.

She once made a mistake in London in buying a second edition of Molière with Boucher's illustrations, which she took for the first edition. She couldn't remember the page containing the telltale word "Madame la Contesse" in place of "Madame la Comtesse."

My father was no collector, but he wanted to have beautiful objects about him. He never ceased to lament bargains he had missed. Just as a financier groans eternally at not having bought sufficiently low or sold sufficiently high, so the amateurs of *bibelots* are more often torn with regrets than completely satisfied.

Prince Colonna had managed to smuggle five or

six masterpieces of the Italian school out of Rome and came to Paris to sell them, merely in order to make ends meet. He summoned us to the ground floor, where he had assembled them. My father would have liked Caravaggio's *Gamesters,* one of the few pictures of the Italian school which do not represent a sacred subject. I should have been content with Perugino's *Saint Sebastian,* which the Louvre acquired for 150,000 francs, a *Virgin* by Francia or a Mantegna. But my mother wouldn't be tempted, because she had just taken on Vallière. My father always regretted those *Gamesters* of Caravaggio. He had admired the picture as a child in Rome.

But there were other things to console him. I particularly admired a piece of Gobelin tapestry: *The Toilet of Psyche.* It adorned the dining-room and produced a fantastic effect on the nights we had big dinner-parties. There is a replica in the Palazzo Madama at Turin.

We used to cast an eye over the table before the arrival of the guests and prowl about the offices to

pick up nice scraps for carrying up to our rooms, where we organized little supper-parties of our own devising. I used to go down again to the dining-room after dinner was over to sniff the scent of precious vintages. We loved to listen to the incredible racket set up by the talking.

But what labour those receptions occasioned! People come in, throw their coats into a cloak-room with an absent look, ransack the buffets, chat, flirt, listen to music, often put down their liqueur-glasses on tapestry-upholstery and their cigarette-ash pretty well everywhere, and punctually find their coat and carriage at the precise moment of their departure; do they realize all the work which their amusement represents?

I have calculated that my mother must have received 45,000 persons at the Rue de Chaillot and my father about the same number, which means that during their lifetime 90,000 people,—many of them strangers,—crossed their threshold. There were five thousand at my father's funeral, ten who paid the customary respects at his grave a twelvemonth afterwards.

The house in the Rue de Chaillot gave the best and most sumptuous receptions in all Paris. My father adored company, and my mother directed that Reception-Factory with consummate skill. I can still see her sitting at her little bureau, writing out lists and programs, talking things over with her chiefs of staff, keeping them well in hand, fully cognizant of everything going on in the house, managing not to get robbed. She aroused my admiration, but not my envy.

She wore herself out to please my father. Her real tastes were other. She envied Madame Émile Strauss, her *entresol* and her clever friends; for my father detested intimacy and, in his desire for a continually renewed cataract of humanity, perpetually extended his circle to the side of youth, so as to avoid seeing himself grow old in his friends' faces. My mother would have preferred a more restricted circle, made up of men of letters, artists and politicians. I cannot recall one member of those classes in the Rue de Chaillot, with the solitary exception of Gabriele d'Annunzio. And him my father received coldly, giving him a tepid shake of the hand, or rather of the fingers, with a mere

"How d'you do"; and that was in the time of his third wife, the Italian.

My mother had the sense of duty, and that word was the great disciplinary force of her life. The moment a certain routine, a certain variety of occupation became part of her duty, she carried it through bravely and indefatigably. She was hard-working and punctual, deterred by no task. She could equally well superintend the linen, start a vegetable-garden, build a house or choose a work of art as keep her accounts and pay her bills.

Dressed in a Worth gown which had cost 900 francs she was at home to visitors once or twice a week, when they filed through the drawing-room without interruption from three to eight o'clock. She received the dimmest and humblest of her acquaintance with the same smile and the same graciousness as the people of importance or those who thought themselves such. The result was admirable, as appeared at the time of the Dreyfus affair, all the battles in which were fought outside our walls. My mother doubled that cape without losing a single friend. In spite of her immense wealth she never excited the jealousy of other

women: her morals were pure and her dresses plain, too plain perhaps. I never saw her adorn herself with those costly gewgaws which play such an important rôle nowadays. A part of her time, however, and of her budget was automatically devoted to good works.

Her time-table was absolutely regular. She went out in her carriage at 3.30, preceded by a footman and holding a "High-Life" scrawled with hieroglyphics under her arm: they indicated cards returned or necessary to be returned, calls to pay etc., and at 7.30 two strokes of the bell and the clatter of horses' hooves announced her return. On the instant we tumbled down from our upper floors to kiss her and hear the narration of her day's adventures, while her maid was relieving her of her furs or her parasols. The dirty little dog yapped and was the first to have her caresses.

She had been to see Madame de Cassin, Madame Howland or one of her sisters, had been listening to a lecture or a little music. There was rarely an element of the unexpected in those day's adventures. Sometimes my father, just back from hunting, would come into her room still dressed

in his pink coat; and even today I can call up the fresh woodland-smell preserved in his rather highly-coloured cheeks, which he held out to us to kiss. And when I saw my mother reading the *Figaro* or *Gaulois* before going to bed at ten o'clock—on the evenings when she was not going out—I came to the conclusion that the life of grown-ups had nothing tempting about it. At that time a respectable woman never went out in the evening except to go into society with her husband.

Our infantile existence was as regular as our parents'. Except work and a two hours' walk in the Champs-Élysées, everything was forbidden. Accordingly we worked, and I went indefatigably from English to German, from the piano to the trapeze, from dancing to drawing.

Professor Larroumet's literary lectures noticeably increased my love of letters, and my charming governess, Mademoiselle Vivier, allowed me to read exactly what I liked. I bought books and perused them as fancy dictated. I liked foreign languages, also natural science, which I learned in Paul Bert's manuals. As for the course in science,

properly speaking, it was held at one o'clock in the Cité du Retiro, and I used to arrive at the double (as we were forbidden to take a cab) at the exact moment that Monsieur Seignette was clambering on to the platform. The overheated room, my delayed digestion—lunch having been bolted too quickly—and the boring nature of the course sent me properly to sleep for forty-five minutes, and during the last quarter of an hour only did I listen, with a dazed air, to Monsieur Seignette explaining, by means of four chalk lines on the blackboard, the mysteries of steam, electricity and the telephone, the laws of gravity etc. or enunciating some elementary principles of chemistry. I knew that vinegar dissolves chalk, that an egg, placed in the neck of a water-bottle under which you have previously lighted a bit of paper in order to produce a vacuum, stretches out longer and longer and seems to be sucked into the inside of the water-bottle. And that's all. I am in despair at my scientific ignorance, but it is too late to remedy it. To make up for it, I enjoyed Musset, Vigny, Baudelaire and Shakespeare even to ecstasy and I loved the pictures in the

Louvre. Thither we used to go twice a week. I formed a small caravan, and we went through the different rooms of the gallery in succession. I went so far as judiciously to select friends possessed of carriages; for I did not want to trail through the Louvre already tired with walking. Voluptuously I sprawled on the cushions of the landau of my friends the Palikaos.

On Sundays we used to climb into Jeanne de Rothschild's. During the winter she often took us to the Lamoureux Concerts, where I have heard Beethoven's *Pastoral Symphony* ten thousand times: musical programs were very limited in those days. In summer we went to play in the Rothschild Park at Boulogne and returned amid armfuls of Persian lilac, pink hawthorn and syringa with which we had filled the carriage.

This healthy, hardy existence continued for several years. By my father's orders, heating stopped with the beginning of March, and our instructors often shivered as they gave us our lessons; I was called at seven and I can still hear the sinister sound of the tap filling the first jug required for my morning tub. But apart from this

slight inconvenience, we were all very happy, cheerful, healthy, working easily and always kept alert by the diversity of our studies.

A happy fatigue brought peaceful sleep at night.

"C'était l'heure où l'essaim des rêves malfaisants
Tord sur leurs oreillers les bruns adolescents. . . ."

But that swarm never came near us.

I smarted under but one solitary grievance—the ban on using a carriage. We were condemned to hard walking. I used to look enviously from behind the windows at the innumerable equipages passing without intermission up and down the Champs-Élysées. When the chestnut-trees were in full leaf, leaving but one gap,—that made by the Rue de Chaillot,—I kept my eyes glued to it to see the victorias go by in which indolent young married couples lounged at their ease: Madame with her parasol open, Monsieur sitting at her side, the coachman and the footman and two smart horses, all going in the direction of the Bois; or else a wonderfully turned-out phaëton, driven by some extremely elegant young man. There were also broughams with an old horse, an old coachman

and old person inside. Only invalids went in for rubber-tyred wheels, which were thought ridiculous.

My father and mother had a series of horses called "big carriage-horses" for the *d'Orsay* and the barouche, medium-sized horses for the landau, wonderful, sinewy pairs of high-steppers, who knew how to paw the ground, for the phaëtons and victorias, and lastly the "night-horse," which brought my father home from the club or Opera.

The owners of well-kept equipages were known and noticed by the denizens of Paris known as *les pannés,* or stony-brokes, who used to sit about the *rond-pont* of the Champs-Élysées to watch them go by. When the sound of the coach-horn blared forth, I used to rush to the window to admire Gordon Bennett's coach or that belonging to Charles de La Rochefoucauld. That brass, singing among the flowering chestnut-trees, beneath the blue sky, was truly the fanfare of the joy of life.

But, alas, my eighteenth birthday was drawing near.

I was torn from my quietude and the beautiful dreams of childhood, to be plunged into a kind of purgatory, where I had to abide until I should enter the married zone. My parents began by taking me to the Opera. My timidity once overcome, I was able to enjoy that entertainment, and, of the resorts of society, the Opera alone afforded me any pleasure. Even today, I cannot conceive it as possible to see or hear an opera from any other angle than precisely that of box 6–8, where I had my seat.

Bathed in the purple light of the box, I saw on my left a vast circle of molten gold, over which sirens bowed themselves. Rows of suede-gloved arms arranged plumes and exhibited the scintillating of diamonds; the small ovals of the faces, set in masses of light or black hair, pivoted on slender necks, in order, so it seemed, to come nearer to the black coats and white shirt-fronts standing behind them. The black holes of the stage-boxes revealed nothing but elbows or opera-glasses levelled at the other boxes, and the animation of the pit contrasted with the immobility of the naked women whose flesh formed a circle round

the crystal chandelier hanging from its painted dome.

On the right, the wan rectangle of the stage, narrowed by the rail in front of the box, projected a magnetism into the inside of the sphere sufficient to hold for three or four hours the attention of a rigid audience, whose attitudes made them look like celebrants of a rite rather than spectators. The soaring of a violin, the bursts of sound made by human voices in song, a continuous musical din punctuated by the muffled banging of box-doors were what maintained this fabulous atmosphere.

The ages and their legends passed by on the stage, embodied by actors in bizarre costumes, singing improbable libretti. Over her swelling armour Lucienne Bréval shook her Valkyrie's locks, and her powerful voice sent the first Wagnerian thrill running over Paris. Rose Caron, drooping her arms (they were too long) amid the stanzas of *Sigurd*, was one of the most moving divinities of the Opera. When Jean de Reszke sang, the ladies' epigastria became tense, and Renaud's appearance made the house one brilliant smile.

The spell-binding resonance of the voices and the music was due to the indolence of the spectators, who abstained from applause.

The Doudeauville box was filling:

"There's Lise arriving with her Polish dinner-party: Roman Potocki and Betka."

"Moya de Janzé is as beautiful as ever. How does she manage to keep so long without moving her eye-lashes?"

When in the interval the Princesse de Tonnay-Charente stood up, the four rows of her pearls cannoned together with a long-drawn-out, soft clicking sound.

The curtain falls.

The velvety atmosphere grows dimmer; for the ladies have collected in the dark half of the boxes to hold their court. The pit is agitated, and the black coats revolve round the semi-circle that runs from the boxes to the wings. Then the noise of the orchestra re-establishes the former postures.

A veteran subscriber, Monsieur de Pontevès, who was old enough to say "How I lament my sixty years," came to say how d'you do to me in Box 6–8.

"I always go to pay my respects to débutantes in the auditorium and on the stage."

When the ballet began, the opera-glasses were trained like machine-guns with invisible ammunition on the dancing-girls' legs. The ladies in the boxes thought it the thing to know the names of their owners.

"The one in the fourth row on the right is kept by old Baron X . . . , the third on the left by the . . . ambassador."

I loved the flakiness of the tuti.

Before the end of the opera the subscribers hurried to one of the ante-rooms reserved for them, where they waited for the footmen to announce their carriages. The Comtesse Greffulhe could be divined in her box, but did not reveal herself. The Princesse Murat was one of the first to leave her stage-box, opposite that appropriated to the President of the Republic, where I have beheld the lordly profile of Waldeck-Rousseau. All these ladies had tiaras, diamond coronets or long sprays of precious stones surmounted by pearls—and not an artificial stone among them.

Each had her *cavaliere servante*. Luzarche

d'Azay, known as Lulu, a handsome little dark man with a red carnation in his button-hole, escorted the Princesse Murat; the Comtesse d'Harcourt laughed amid a host of pretty fellows; one Gontaut fluttered about, another came to rest near Madame Jules Porgès. That tall, ravishing Viennese wished to look like a Marie-Antoinette dressed by Monsieur Jean Worth. And then the beautiful ladies were swallowed up by their carriages, as in the song of *Marlborough*, "some with their husbands and some all alone."

One "very high-born and very honest lady," as Brantôme would say, in her desire at all costs to have a companion, fastened on to Monsieur X . . .'s coat-tails as she was departing, in order to carry him off with her. But that was not in accordance with his program, and the lady carried nothing away but a button from his dress-coat, which in her ardour she had torn off.

The foreigners went to sup at the Café de Paris or Paillard's; the Frenchwomen went home.

One detail perturbed me. I could not understand why the servants waited up for their employers, who really might have managed without them. It

is true of course that in those days the women were imprisoned in their corsets and laced dresses, which they could hardly get out of without assistance.

On Tuesdays I went to the Comédie Française. Racine was rarely in the bill, but, instead, imbecile curtain-raisers and deadly plays in verse, which were neither classical nor modern and heightened the insipidity of their alexandrines with mythological subjects. No one dared confess to his boredom, and everyone repeated indefinitely: "You always spend such an enjoyable evening at the Français, everything's so well done."

The Odéon had other surprises in store for me: historical dramas in verse and five acts, like *Bertrand Dugueselin, Jeanne d'Arc, Louis XI, etc.*

But the worst of my social occupations were the soirées. Rows of women and girls, sitting under a brutal electrolier on gilded chairs tied together, listened to monologues and old songs such as *Colinette* and *Annette,* unless they might be Romances or Lieder—Schumann's *Ich grolle nicht—,* screamed out by a large-chested female or a very dark baritone, whose notes echoed painfully in

my heels. I should have liked to run or skip instead of sticking there and fanning myself, buried beneath the protuberances of my fair neighbours. The men stood in the doorways, gloomy and silent. The festivity came to an end at midnight.

When I got home, I used to indulge in bitter meditations on these strange, fatiguing and costly gatherings, the purpose of which escaped me; and I told myself with a certain logic that such pastimes must in some sort be a "blind" and not the consummation of eighteen years of life; the pleasure of life could not possibly consist in these stiff assemblages. So often had I heard people say: "When is your little girl coming out? When are you going to take her into society? Little X . . . is out already," that I expected a marvellous promotion. It can't be, thought I, there must be something else: human beings are not so far lacking in sense as to be unable to devise a better use for the time given us. I was right; but I had not yet realized that there were special concoctions designed for the young girls of our nation. Everything stupid, conventional, factitious and ugly was

set aside for them: fatuous tunes, silly plays, tame conversation, disgusting clothes. Good girls were dressed in light, insipid colours and the poorest of materials, and all the touches that give "tone" —diamonds, powder, paint and perfume—were rigorously forbidden. The best they could do was not to smell unpleasantly, and I once distinctly heard a certain Monsieur d'Albon say: "This place stinks of arm-pits, let's go to Maxim's."

I should probably have enjoyed myself better at Maxim's too.

After a month of these activities I besought my mother to stop taking me out and to let me go on quietly with my studies. But in vain. Under the pretext that she wasn't my real mother, she said she would have felt herself falling short in her duty, if she did not make me do what others girls of my age did.

So my studies were rudely interrupted. Just when I was really going to pluck some fruits from the tree of knowledge, put in some hard work at my drawing (which I was beginning to like) at Jullian's studio or elsewhere, confine my-

self to a curriculum of hard reading and light dreaming, I was forced to dress myself in pink muslin and go dancing.

I have always been susceptible to atmospheres; whether they be of my own choosing or not, they overpower me. Accordingly, I soon became one of the ruck of young girls, sharing their preoccupations and proudly counting up my cotillon-favours.

The *bals blancs* for girls began at midnight. The hairdresser came to do my curls at eleven o'clock, and I yawned fit to dislocate my jaw while he was arranging a sprig of may or lily of the valley in my hair.

Big or little, the ball-rooms were always full of an eager crowd. The *"frotteurs,"* as we used to call the young men, were usually ugly and skinny; they couldn't dance, they dug their sharp knees into my legs, dirtied my satin shoes, rumpled my frock, puffed the smell of buffet in my face, and I did my best to keep them at arm's length while they hauled me about to the strains of a waltz by Waldteufel or Métra through the serpentine tracks of other dancers often as maladroit as myself. I got vicious thrusts from elbows, my feet

were bruised from being trodden on, and after this exhilarating exercise the Adonis would put me back in my chair next to mother.

If I was unlucky enough to dance twice with the same gentleman, I was severely reprimanded.

When the heat became stifling, I used resolutely to open a window and stand in the embrasure, though my frock was cut low in the neck and sweat had matted my hair.

These young men were generally too poor or too carefully brought up to go on the loose and too stupid or lazy to become students at any advanced institution. Sport had not yet begun to exercise its beneficent action, which has truly beautified the race and metamorphosed boys who seemed to belong rather to ornithology into the fine, well-developed fellows we see today.

The aces of the period, they merely cast a contemptuous eye over the crowd of us and went off somewhere else. I saw their silhouette, glimpsed for an instant on the threshold of our stinking furnace. Those were the "marrying men," who came to make sure that the little girl about whom they had been approached was not impossible. To dance

with her would have compromised them, and they were holding back. The eye cast, they proceeded to compute the virgin's dowry.

Willy-nilly you had to pass beneath those Caudine forks; it was "the usual thing." And young girls' lives were in fact so disagreeable, that they all rushed headlong at marriage, like a herd of sheep at the door of the pen when it is opened in the morning.

A contemporary of mine was undecided between two offers. Her father made inquiries of the lawyers, made the choice he thought fitting and returned one evening to the country, where his family was awaiting him.

"Papa, papa, which of them am I to marry?"

And the child clapped her hands with delight.

I often discovered that the victims of "the usual thing" were equally the victims of marriage and that they were not made happy by these gentlemen, who deserted them, were unfaithful to them for the sake of more seductive persons, or else ruined them,—often both together.

A woman's husband then was only a more or less cruel jailer? I thought it inconceivable that

the happiness of one being should be exclusively dependent on another being. Nature, it seemed to me, held a greater range of experience in store for her children; there must be compensations for conjugal infelicity. The resigned melancholy of certain women, who, years on end, waited patiently for the return of the unfaithful or loose-living husband, seemed to me offensive to the whole female sex.

At that time Frenchwomen were subject to their husbands to an incredible degree, possessing the right to dispose neither of their time nor their opinions nor their money. I have known one who respectfully asked her spouse for stamps, to which he made reply:

"I gave you some only yesterday."

My cousin de Gramont d'Aster, although white hair wreathed her temples, on being invited by my father and mother to go to the opera with them, turned to her husband with:

"May I, Antoine?"

They whose virginity was protracted to thirty years went out in the company of a maid, and then only in order to go to church or to the post. Every

week my cousin de X . . . , who remained an old maid, used to be presented with twopence by her brother with whom she lived, to pay her pew-rent.

The direct effect of this subjection on its victims was a total incapacity for dealing with the realities of life. Ignorant of the machinery of their own business-affairs, they left the management of them to their husbands or a lawyer, understanding nothing about them, hardly capable even of catching a train. A relation of mine was reduced to despair because she had lost the bit of paper on which her husband had written down the times of her trains; to consult a time-table was a man's job.

Forced into marriage, very many of the young men made mediocre husbands.

Monsieur de C . . . went for his son and said:

"Either you marry Mademoiselle Z . . . or make a trip round the world."

He married her, she fainted during the wedding-night, he rang the bell:

"Look to Madame la Vicomtesse."

He had got her with child and had no further dealings with her of any sort.

How many husbands have gone off on their

honeymoon with their mistress in the same train, she following the ingenuous bride from hotel to hotel!

At that period of time, so-called society girls and the demi-mondaines did not seem to belong to the same human race. The former, before marriage, were generally insignificant and puny. That trammeled existence of theirs, with no exercise beyond playing the piano, did not serve to embellish them. On the other hand, the courtesans of the epoch, commonly called "grues" or "cocottes," enjoyed a glory which has vanished before a happy levelling up and down. When they passed by in their victorias, in showy dresses, their dyed, yellow hair under immense hats, in a physical exuberance often due to their country-origin, they had no great difficulty in fascinating the rutting males.

It was the fashion among the young men to run themselves into debt for those "creatures," as the phrase then was. The stars were Liane de Pougy, Émilienne d'Alençon, Berthe d'Égreville, Nelly Niewstratten, Nanette Stanley . . .

The family would sometimes dispatch its young man to Africa. The eldest son of the Duchesse

d'Uzès, Jacques, ruined himself for Émilienne d'Alençon; he even gave her the family jewels. His mother packed him off to the colonies where he died of dysentery. The poor little duke had, as matter of fact, gone at the age of twenty straight from the skirts of his clerical tutor to the cocotte's. In such affairs vanity often played at least as big a part as love. The courtesans for whose sake the boys will commit follies nowadays are called: the big Panhard, the new Talbot, the little Citroën.

In the drawing-rooms where sadly I gyrated there were, none the less, two stars: Mademoiselle de Beaurepaire, whose second husband is the Duc de Brissac, and Mademoiselle de Bonrepos. The latter dressed almost as well as a married woman and sometimes managed to get away from her mother, Madame de Sainte-Marie d'Agneau. Her genuine beauty served her for dowry. She married Monsieur de Franqueville, called de la Muette, whose father possessed that great piece of land on which a new wealthy quarter is rising today.

The balls in the Rue de Chaillot were incontestably marvellous. To the usual dancing crowd my father and mother added their own acquaint-

ance and, despite the alarm of one mother who precipitately carried off her daughter because "there were married women at this ball," society appreciated our delightful receptions. I have kept a vivid memory of the house, perfumed with flowers, gilded and glittering with light, one turmoil of charming people, ambassadors and elegant women; the rooms of state were full of chairs from Belloir's, with a great gleaming space for the waltzers.

I led a cotillon with a stout gentleman, about whom custom had decided that he should be the fashion that year—no one knows why. His name was Monsieur de Vatimesnil. But I had no need of him to organize my cotillon and to place, for instance, Antoinette de Saint-Sauveur next to Eugène Schneider, her future husband, or to arrange a set of quadrilles with the two greatest transatlantic heiresses: Consuelo Vanderbilt and Anna Gould.

I saw the latter the very first time she came to Paris. People set her down as ugly, and so she was, measured by the aesthetic standards of Paris, though perhaps not by those of her own country.

I have always pictured her to myself as the imperious chieftainess of some Iroquois tribe, her head girt with tall eagles' feathers. She was small and thin, her face entirely taken up by a large nose and two enormous coal-black eyes; her complexion was yellow, her smooth hair arranged in the form of an aeroplane's wings made her even stumpier, and her back was a mass of long black hairs. Boni de Castellane, whom she eventually married, managed to transform her—by means of depilation, massage, make-up and a hair-dresser.

Consuelo Vanderbilt was a tall girl whose small head, with retroussé eyes like a Japanese, drooped languidly over her shoulder. She possessed great charm. Her mother, Mrs. Belmont, did not let her dally long in the drawing-rooms of Paris. She intended her for the English aristocracy, which she deemed more advantageous: "I must take baby home." At the time of writing Consuelo Vanderbilt, as good-looking as ever under her grey hair, is the wife of Monsieur Jacques Balsan, a rich manufacturer from the Centre, and lives in the South of France.

Young men who did not put in an appearance

at other balls came to ours in the Rue de Chaillot: Aymon de Lucinge, Armand and Édouard de La Rochefoucauld, François de Brissac, whose chief interest was racing, Humbert de la Tour-du-Pin, Alfred de Chabannes-la-Palice, Pierre d'Arenberg, who didn't want to marry yet, Léon de Janzé, Bertrand de Mun, Henri de Sigalas, Philibert de Clermont-Tonnerre, whom I married, Georges de Montesquiou, unhappily wedded to baccarat, Giovanni Costa, an Italian who looked like an Apollo.

At the end of the cotillon, women brought him roses. He really was irresistibly beautiful. When he went into a public resort, the demi-mondaines used to send him their addresses. Clean shaven, he rather resembled the Hermes of Praxiteles. Never did he appear to me so handsome as one morning when I saw him, in white flannels and knickerbockers, with a white straw-hat on his head. He had just put his bicycle away in a store on the Champs-Élysées, and, as he passed close by me, it was as if I beheld the Discobolus with his clothes on. He committed suicide for a Russian grand-duchess,—more probably from general satiety and

because he was beginning to be no longer beautiful.

Giovanni Costa was the son of a Florentine and an Irishwoman,—an excellent cross-breed. His mother was stabbed on her husband's grave by a rejected suitor. Later on I learned that the beautiful Giovanni was appreciated by both sexes.

The Uribarren, the Yturbe, the Diaz and the Erazzu took part in every festivity.

One of the most charming was the show got up in honour of the Duc d'Aumale. In the middle of the drawing-room, on a platform an inch or two high, Julia Bartet and Paul Mounet acted *Alain Chartier*. The divine Julia tricked out Borelly's mediocre verse with an exquisite, singing intonation, and her "asphodels"—an excellent word in poetry—sent the brilliant audience into ecstasies. She also recited Hérédia's three poems on Cleopatra, and great was her success.

"Et sur elle penché, le fier Impérator
Vit dans ses larges yeux étoilés de points d'or
Toute une mer immense où fuyaient les galéres."

Hérédia was a novelty.

Julia Bartet finished with *Mimi Pinson.* My seventeen years plumed themselves with the two well-known lines:

"Mimi n'a pas l'âme vulgaire,
Mais son cœur est républicain."

I made use of this opportunity to sneak into the little drawing-room, set aside for the actors. I was disappointed; Paul Mounet, "all anyhow" and covered with vaseline, disgusted me.

Mademoiselle Pierrat also appeared at the Rue de Chaillot and was much fêted.

At a matinée performance I had heard Mademoiselle Moreno play the Infanta in Corneille's *Cid,* and her morbid grace and perfect diction had quite thrown Rodrigue and Chimène into the shade. I made my father promise to ask her to recite some poetry, at which, in my opinion, she excelled, and, in particular, Beaudelaire's *Balcon,* which lay in her range of voice. Was she in a bad humour or her public indifferent? Whatever the cause, she read the poem in a dull, monotonous voice, and the effect was not what I had hoped for.

I liked those splendid entertainments, but I belonged already to another generation, more volatile, curious, eager for movement, which had from the outset risen above sterile precedence. If Paris was a closed book to unmarried girls, foreign cities were less so, and happy circumstances allowed me to know three interesting towns, the complexities of which opened new horizons before my eyes: London, Frankfort and Florence.

Exaltation is the only qualification that can be given to my journey to London.

From Folkestone, where we had spent August, my mother proceeded to her sister, Lady Rothschild, at Tring Park, and I followed after.

What amazed me most at this first contact with English high life was the diversity of interest afforded by the guests whom the Rothschilds had collected at their place for the week-end. For the first time I saw in the flesh the politicians whose caricatures I had contemplated in *Punch* and lived on familiar terms with them. From the consideration shown them on all sides I felt that they

were omnipotent in the country. Nevertheless, they mixed in every-day life and the life of society, differing in that respect from their French colleagues.

Sir William Harcourt, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, a fat and jovial, but nice man, chatted with the editor of *The Times*. I played a game of tennis with George Curzon, who, a few days later, was good enough to show me the National Gallery. He never stopped before any pictures but those of the English school, indifferent to all others. Did he not show this exclusive attitude all through his politics too?

But I recall with pleasure the walk through the rooms of the National Gallery and the explanations given me by that English statesman. He particularly made me admire the famous Lady Hamilton, painted by Romney both as a Magdalene and as a Bacchante. Lady Hamilton is the very personification of English beauty, but I preferred the more acid graces of Charles II's mistress, Nell Gwynn, painted by Hogarth.

As George Curzon was a bit of a snob, the following quatrain was in circulation:

My name is George Nathaniel Curzon,
I am a most important person.
My tongue is sharp, my hair is sleek,
I dine at Blenheim twice a week.

Curzon had mapped out his life's program beforehand, and not only did he carry it out, but he even had time over—and didn't know what to do with it! Happily for him, his antipathy to France and irascible humour helped him get through the last years of his life.

While still an undergraduate at Oxford, Curzon had made up his mind to become Viceroy of India. He learned what it was necessary to know for filling this arduous office, set out for India as an ordinary citizen, travelling right up to the frontiers of that empire in order the better to study it, made friends with Russian consuls, got hold of secret papers and documents, all of which resulted, in the end, in his becoming a perfect Viceroy.

I admired such clearsightedness and such determination.

Another English statesman, Lord Rosebury, had likewise made up his mind that he would be Prime

Minister, that he would win the Derby and that he would marry an heiress. All these things were attained as the effect of Will projected into space.

Lord Rothschild met us in London and took us to the theatre to see plays which were both funny and decent. For the first time in my life I laughed in a theatre, instead of yawning. Those diversions, those famous men, those new experiences, that great city with its peculiar, distinguished uproar, were more than enough to turn the head of a little French school girl.

At Folkestone, my mother consenting, I used to go for walks after dinner along the cliff. My brother's tutor or some tennis-partner went with me to pace the black macadam of the Lees. The coastal lights danced between rigid iron wires. Niggers sang sentimental songs to their own banjo-accompaniment beneath the cold English moon. A strange party had taken it into their heads to sing hymns in a horse-drawn cart, in which a piano had been put. They wore masks and stopped under every street-lamp to intone their chants, afterwards passing the hat round. Nothing is more sinister than the sound of a piano

out of doors, but this English morbidity, which has to be relieved by a spice of lunacy, stirred in me some atavism or other bequeathed me by my grandmother MacKinnon. In the afternoons the Salvation Army was loud in the land, much in evidence along the roads on which enormous red and green posters took the place of trees. It brought sinners to the throne of grace in the shadow of Bovril, Army and Navy Tobacco, Mustard Sauce and Worcester Sauce.

After London, Frankfort.

How peaceful and medieval it looks, that broad Rhine spread out at the foot of *Burgen,* which we begin to see within twelve hours of leaving the Gare du Nord. The Main, though narrower, carries down waters of the same colour. Every morning I gazed at it through the double windows of the house on the Untermainquai where the Baronne Charles de Rothschild lived.

On the death of Baron Charles she had divided up her property among her daughters, keeping for herself only what was strictly necessary for a

woman of her age. She lived in a comfortable, but not luxurious house, brightened by fresh flowers, those large German lilies-of-the-valley. Her valuable collections were housed in a special gallery open to the public on specified days. Among other objects you could see there the celebrated Jachminster, a unique piece from the hand of a medieval German goldsmith, and the four hundred enamel snuff-boxes, which, after having wandered all over seventeenth and eighteenth century Europe in that international exchange of portraits between Louis XIV and Maria Mancini, Fredrick II and Voltaire, Catherine of Russia and Louis XV, had at last come to rest in the Baron Charles de Rothschild's glass cases.

Frankfort was a good old town, still cherishing memories of the independence it enjoyed before 1866, when it was a Free City. No yoke seemed to press upon it. Its square houses and wide avenues, down which a vehicle might pass every twenty minutes or so, gave it a well-to-do provincial air, and the banyan-trees of the *Palmengarten* sheltered none but *Kaffeeschwestern,* honest women who knitted as they drank their

coffee. The houses were, for the most part, upholstered in olive-green, a perfect match to duck-and-olives.

Its peaceable way of life banished all elegance. Some desperate characters cast a furtive eye towards Paris at the Baronne Charles's tea-parties; among the professors of archæology, among the ladies who smelt of their husbands' tobacco-pipes, there were one or two who accused one another reciprocally: "She says that when she's in Paris she means to go to all the *little* theatres." To go to all the *little* theatres was a kind of debauch to all those honest *Frankfurterinnen.*

No sinister noise of war muttered among those gentle, studious Germans.

The picture-gallery, carefully arranged, possessed middling specimens of every school. One primitive fascinated me.

I saw over Goethe's house. His parents had made up their minds that he should be a Doctor of Laws at twenty-two and that, after his marriage, they would give up to him the first floor of their house and themselves retire to the ground-floor. Today the immense figure of their son

floats over the whole city of Frankfort, like those strange personages whom Chagal paints hovering over Russian towns.

In the eyes of the French, Goethe and his Germany became a kind of reassuring, flattering Christmas-card picture. The Frenchman who has read Goethe is always proud of the fact. Echoes of the terrible Germany of Essen and Hamburg did not penetrate as far as this city of Goethe and family-parties.

The opera used to start at six o'clock, to end at ten. You had supper when you got home. A varied repertory afforded three pleasant evenings a week to the notables, who had their boxes and went there, without dressing up, to chat and listen to the music. The pit was full of people togged out in incredible fashion. One woman, in a gymn. suit, had simply put on a mackintosh over it.

And that population, to a man (and woman), made money, children and music. Every town has its own atmosphere. They claim for Brussels that its air incites to the consumption of meat and the

search of the picturesque: the air of Frankfort must be propitious to finance, just as that of Paris is to extravagance.

Chamber-music resounds through every house. The Germans are held together by the sacred bonds of music; for every member of a family plays one or more instruments, and, instead of glowering silence or hard words, there are cantatas for three voices, trios and quartets.

Music is the characteristic sound of the wealthy quarters. In the poor quarters of Frankfort its place is taken by strident brawling in Yiddish, which is spoken throughout Sachsenhausen and which Sudermann used sometimes in his play of *Hannerlé Mattern.* In it I can still catch the singing intonation and long-drawn-out wailing of Hebrews who have not yet made their fortune.

"Firenze nell maio! Florence in May!"—the nasal exclamation uttered by an Italian with an enthusiasm no Frenchman would have shown in the railway-carriage which was carrying us beyond Genoa. Although it was only March, I an-

ticipated paradisiacal joys of this journey. The coincidence of three elements favoured those memorable hours—*la Primavera, la Gioventù* and *l'Arte.*

On a Pisan spring morning I entered the Campo Santo. I had heard of frescoes and imagined a painting on a wall. But when I set eyes on Benozzo Gozzoli's *Grape-gatherers,* I was thrilled to the core. A young Florentine is holding out his hand for a bunch of grapes which a girl is cutting. She is perched on one of those short Tuscan ladders which even today you see propped against the trunks of olive-trees. The dimness of the painting, which seemed carved out of the atmosphere of place and time, the swelling grace of that being, created in order to impart the joy of his form, his poise rigid in one desire for the grapes, that palpitation of youth breaking out with the self-assurance of a poppy in the sunlight,—all these things make Benozzo Gozzoli's fresco a kind of triumphal hymn which I was hearing for the first time and the strains of which I have followed wherever they sounded. I experienced that revelation of beauty without alloy: I stood before the

fresco alone, nor dreamed of any companion.

In this same Dionysiac condition I wandered over Florence. The Arno made me understand the Seine, and all along the hill of Fiesole I recited the poetry of Ronsard.

We had vast rooms in an old palace that had been made into an uncomfortable hotel, and in the evenings my cousin Arnaud de Gramont used to turn liras into francs. We profited by a "good" exchange, and I learned the contempt of countries with a high rate of exchange for those with a low.

My cousins Arnaud and Marie de Gramont had been good enough to take charge of me. My cousin Marie was indifferent to art-galleries, preferring afternoon-tea with Florentines. She herself was like a beautiful Italian madonna.

Since those days the "art-centres" have had a long inning in book-sellers' windows, and Botticelli has become hackneyed.

Feeling for art has always seemed to me something higher than knowledge of art. Once you experience the former, it perfumes the whole of your life.

During the whole of that trip I was floating on

air, in the *Quattrocento* in fact, and that facet of the universe, though I shall never see it again, has become part of me.

During all this time, the offers of marriage had poured in at the Rue de Chaillot, in such abundance that I was both irritated and humiliated. Young men I didn't know, who were probably experiencing the perfection of love and romance at Nice or Aix-les-Bains in the company of Mademoiselle Zizi Pampan, asked me in marriage through the agency of unoccupied seniors, who found "placing" girls as amusing a sport as placing stakes at roulette. Even my father took a hand in the game. He used to wake me up with a start at dawn to offer me now a young *conseiller-général* with a big future, now a young sprig of nobility who would inherit wonderful tapestry with friezes. "With friezes?" I would repeat in a dazed way. And I only came into contact with young men I was *not* to marry.

This torment lasted two years.

One evening I saw, like a flash, the handsome figure of Philibert de Clermont-Tonnerre, with his mahogany-coloured beard resplendent in a door-

way, on the point, no doubt, of disappearing in the direction of Maxim's: that impressed me. The obstinate refusal with which my father opposed this match inflamed me all the more. A certain lady had earmarked him for *her* daughter and persuaded him and my mother that this giant's health was precarious. Other people, more persuasive and less interested, made him reverse his decision some months afterwards. So, on a spring afternoon in the woods of Vallière, I became engaged to Monsieur de Clermont-Tonnerre.

What was I like in those days? I haven't the least idea, but here are some remarks which I picked up.

When I was twelve and bathing at Deauville with my hair hanging down my back, people on the beach used to say: "Come and look at this little girl's hair: it's a mantle of gold."

When I was confirmed, my father said: "Now which side is the back?"

When I was fifteen and went skating at the

Tir aux Pigeons, my governess said: "If you weren't Mademoiselle de Gramont, no one would skate with you, you're so plain."

My brothers used to say: "In the first place, if you have oyster-coloured eyes . . ."

My father once took us to the Palais de Glace. After seeing us gyrating in front of him, he was constrained to observe: "You girls are abominably dressed! What you're wearing are not coats, but caftans." Our bottle-green coats did, in fact, go down to our heels, and two great pockets, gaping with constant use, yawned on our flanks.

Afterwards, when I "came out," my father declared that I looked like a revolving umbrella. My mother often called me "great gawk," and my uncle de Choiseul "petit Saxe."

Later on, the usual compliments were showered on me: "Keepsake," "Little Greuze," etc. . . . I only remember three which I really appreciated.

My concierge said that, until my trip to China (when I had jaundice), I was just like a flower.

One night Marius, the cook, who had come for orders to my room when I had gone to bed, told

the maids (who passed it on to me): "With a pretty little phiz like that you ought to go out every night in the week!"

Marcel Proust once wrote to me: "Your laugh, like a bullfinch's. . . ."

I have often been very badly dressed. In that respect, I am no Parisian, but rather a Frankforter. My mother, who had all the virtues, did not know how to dress, except on those days and nights in which she put herself into the hands of Worth, and we children literally looked frights. We had inherited a length of purple velvet, which my aunt de Wagram had had among her wedding-presents and of which she had made no use; and for four years all of us, boys and girls alike, were dressed in that same purple velvet. One afternoon I was hooted by my playfellows in the Champs-Élysées and only put a stop to it by telling them we were Russians. "It isn't true, you've got no furs."

This lack of elegance in my attire was further accentuated by my husband's niggardliness. Like very many men of the *gratin,* he would not allow of expenditure on hats and dresses, and to pay

Doucet, I was often compelled to pawn my jewels, redeeming them with incredible difficulty and agonies of mind. If I dressed badly, to make up for it I dressed *up* well and on that score I have no repinings. To this very day I have hardly missed a single fancy-dress ball.

My parents had set about building Vallière. They hadn't considered occupying the penates of others beyond the point of restoring Bidache, in the *département* of the Basses-Pyrénées.

Of this cradle of the Gramont family there remains but an arid hill of rather more than a hundred acres in extent with the imposing ruins of a Renaissance château, added to by the Maréchal de Gramont.

In 1793 a steward, wishing to destroy his fraudulent accounts, set fire to the library. The flames spread over the whole of the château and destroyed it. Overwhelmed by his guilt, the steward drowned himself in the Bidouze. The year before, the records had been taken to a house in the village, where they were found again, and the family-

pictures had long been in Paris when the Revolution broke out. The mullioned windows remain eternally open to the sky of Béarn, and a great Louis XIV gateway gives impressiveness to this collection of stones which commands the valley of the Bidouze.

The Nord main lines, along which the Rothschild estates spread out in a series, were explored, and my father and mother finally decided on that of Mortefontaine, in the *département* of the Oise.

It is a stretch of four thousand acres or so of woodland, common and meadows, broken up by four lakes, dug out by twelfth-century monks. On the slope of one of these lakes my parents put up a great château, which recalls that at Azay-le-Rideau.

The view from the central hall is dazzling. On the right, the Île Molton; on the left, the Île d'Amour; straight in front, meadows running up to the fringe of Ermenville forest, with its tufts of foliage rising one above the other. The spire of Senlis cathedral can be made out in the distance. "You might think yourself in Scotland, and only

twenty-five miles to Paris," is the phrase our guests used to repeat as if to order. It isn't an accurate one: Sylvie's country is pleasanter than that of the Scots, because of the light in which it is bathed.

When he was casting about for a site, my father had an idea of building the château on the Ile Molton. I put it to him that he couldn't at the same time be in the picture and enjoy it. He gave way to this observation of my youthful good sense. I also made him raise the sky-line of the building substantially: seen from a distance, its flat top lacked elegance.

And the most superabundant comfort was lavished over the house. Every one of the thirty bedrooms had its own bath-room and lavatory. The architect did not shrink from making the corridors too wide, so that the purveyor of the carpets might make his little profit in getting special velvet pile woven.

Everything which can contribute to increasing the amenities of country-life was set in train by my parents: they started preserving pheasants, they engaged keepers, they built kennels, glass-houses full of orchids, stables and a stud-farm. The

de luxe horses stayed in Paris, and service was amply maintained by sixteen post-horses of a uniform grey, with plaited tails, bells on their collars and postilions on their backs. The station-omnibus was pulled by five post-horses, three abreast and two harnessed tandem. The saddle-horses and the pony for the governess-cart made up the tale of the stable, which was kept like a drawing-room. Everything in it gleamed, the horses' cruppers, the leather, the steel and the English coachman's top-hat. Motor-cars are now garaged in that château built for horses.

On summer mornings the lake was gay with bathing-parties and, in the afternoons, with boats and canoes cleaving the water.

In autumn, golden clouds of pheasants broke up as the birds fell with muffled sounds among the dead leaves. A triangle of wild ducks passed, whistling, from one pond to another, and often a stag was taken at the furthest end of Molton; horns resounded from Ermenonville to Châalis.

The multitude of our guests took its fill of all this. Uninterruptedly fetched from, and taken to, railway-stations, over-heated and over-fed, it had

its choice of bridge, music and theatricals. It really had nothing to complain of—which did not prevent it from vaunting the old architecture of Tanlay, the former castle of Admiral Coligny in Burgundy. To be sure, at Tanlay they exalted the lavatories of Vallière.

A housekeeper watched over everyone's requirements and once received a scolding because she could not satisfy a demand for suppositories.

The Grand Duke Vladimir came to hunt at Vallière. The Czar's uncle was all-powerful. He strode the drawing-room with his firm Romanoff step and seemed to embody the authority of Czarism with his formidable breadth of shoulder and eagle nose. They had a way, those Grand Dukes, of identifying the houses of French noblemen with the night-clubs they had probably just come from. "Janzé, just taste that brandy for me," said the Grand Duke before making his way to the liqueur-tray.

The Grand Duke Cyril also came for the hunting, as did the Grand Duke Boris. The latter woke up painfully during lunch, rubbing his eyes like someone who hasn't got up and dressed yet. "The fellow drinks nothing but beer now," Ollivier, the

headwaiter of the Ritz, mutters when Boris sits down to table these days.

The Grand Duke Vladimir was pleasant to women. I sat by his side on the heath while he was shooting partridges, and he confided to me his predilection for a young actress by the name of Bignon, who had hair the colour of moonlight.

I had the honour of being received several times by the Duc d'Aumale at Chantilly.

A small court composed of local grandees stood round his chair, which exhibited all the appliances associated with gout. He gave audience in his library; for his librarian, Monsieur Maçon, had kindly offered to turn over for our benefit the pages of the Duc de Berry's *Book of Hours*. His Highness then conducted us through the galleries of the château of Chantilly.

Louis Philippe's son looked like a plaster statuette of Napoleon III on account of the whiteness of his hair, moustache and little beard. He remained standing for two solid hours, with that maliciousness which princes display in preventing

their *entourage* from sitting down. He gave explanations of the pictures in his collection, but his commentary was always one in arrears. "Notice the pallor of death and the pallor of the snow," he would say in front of Rousseau's *Oak,* in the belief that he was exhibiting Gérôme's *Duel.*

The modern collection at Chantilly, the Diaz's, Meissonniers, etc., is already old-fashioned; but the drawings of Clouet, the Corneilles de Lyon and Fouquet's miniatures make the château a place for ever embellished by the most stimulating images of the past. Why is it, I always ask myself, that the most knowing connoisseurs of bygone art always come to grief over that of their own day? Why Diaz, Meissonnier, Gérôme, when you might have Manet, Renoir and Monet?

Madame de Clinchamp, known as "la Maintenonette" (for the fountains of Chantilly are supplied by the Nonette), sped the prince's parting guests. She was the old friend of his old age.

The Duc d'Aumale had wit—and of a very broad kind. When he spoke of himself as a young man, he was fond of repeating: "Once upon a time, four of my members were supple and one

stiff, now there's one supple one and four stiff."

The château's architecture is heavy in its Louis-Philippe style. Piled up in a hollow, even its reflection in the artificial waters round about cannot lighten it.

The equestrian statue of the Great Condé, in the court of honour, is the only commanding thing about the place. It makes me think of that young Princesse de Conti, who wanted to escape by night from Chantilly in order to join a lover. Her cloak caught in the angle of her ancestor's pedestal; the great Condé frightened her, and she returned home like a good girl.

The mixture of water and woodland there is given harmony by the architecture of the great stables, whose grey stones, plain or shaped, are pure eighteenth-century and add the note of life to the landscape.

The Noailles hunt has met for some years past in Chantilly forest, and on St. Hubert's day the horsewomen and gentlemen debouching from the main gate of the great stables give the locality once more an animation which the zealous restorers have been unsuccessful in evoking.

Once upon a time Mortefontaine was part of the domains belonging to the Princes de Condé. When the Duc d'Enghien died, the last Prince de Condé had no other direct descendant.

Louis Philippe, who wanted Chantilly for one of his sons, wheedled the Prince's mistress, Sophie Dawes, Baronne de Feuchères—a pretty Englishwoman whose influence on the senile old man was enormous—, giving her to understand that if a will were made in favour of the Duc d'Aumale, her rights in Mortefontaine and Saint-Leu, which the Prince had promised her, would not be contested. The Baronne brought it about. But, later, Condé formed the project of re-making his will in favour of the Duc de Bordeaux, Charles X's grandson, and of fleeing to Switzerland, in order to escape from the tyranny of Madame de Feuchères, who sometimes used to beat him till he cried. He was found hanged, gruesomely in the nick of time, just as he was about to put this project into execution, early in 1830. So the Duc d'Aumale came into Chantilly and Madame de Feuchères into Mortefontaine.

The descendants of the latter conveyed to my

parents all but the whole of that interesting property. I have often met Madame Corbin, Sophie Dawes's grand-niece, a gouty octogenarian driven about the avenues of the park in a little carriage. At the time of the sale she had reserved for herself the "château known as Mortefontaine," separated by the paved high-road from the main part of the estate, which my parents called Vallière, after one of the lakes.

Joseph Bonaparte lived at Mortefontaine, where, on October 3rd, 1800, a treaty was signed between France and the United States. He transformed the park in accordance with the English taste of the day, putting up little ruins here and there. He loved the place. "Let me reign at Mortefontaine," he said when he had become Comte de Survilliers. His sister, Pauline Borghese, visited at Mortefontaine. Her bath-room still exists, close to an old dairy. Like Poppœa, she used to take baths of milk.

I must say that my father and mother, having deliberately chosen and planned the place, derived unending pleasure from it. My father smoked his cigar in front of the view, his face dilated with a

joy which it still gives me pleasure to recollect. And my mother saw in advance that great house full of grand-children.

We young people diverted ourselves in thousands of ways. For several years I had a passion for theatricals and indulged in them to my heart's content. Reinforced by neighbours and the garrison at Senlis, I got up *tableaux-vivants,* rhymed *pièces d'occasion* and acted the plays of Labiche.

Nowadays golf rejuvenates or supplies the energies. The present owner of Vallière, my brother Armand, has laid out marvellous links. A sterile waste has become impregnated with life, and the players can take their pleasure in a rustic expanse cut up by heaths, clumps of trees and bunkers, which make the golf-course at Mortefontaine one of the two most beautiful in France—the other being that at Fontainebleau. And you keep on saying: "And we're only twenty-five miles from Paris."

My father had entered on a third marriage in 1907, with Donna Maria Ruspoli. Out of respect for my mother's memory, I waited some time before I made the acquaintance of his new wife. On

that memorable day, my father twiddled his spoon in his tea-cup with an indefinite gesture, the same which is attributed to a certain royal lady when she is struck of a heap by the sight of a young man.

Donna Maria, with a heavy cold and an olive-green dress, looked provincial. But subsequently, thanks to the dresses of Doucet, Madeleine Vionnet, d'Irfé, Chanel, Julia Morand, Jean Patou, Paquin, Wormser, Busvine, Charvet, Germaine Elenief, Worth, Médoc, Louise Boulanger, Paul Poiret, Alice Guidé, Jeanne Bourval, Jeanne Lanvin, to the hats of Marthe Collot, Marthe Régnier, Madeleine Panizon, Reboux, Suzanne Talbot, Armande Magny, Alex, Maria Guy, Alix Lebreton, to the shoes of Maxwell, Perugia, Ciregia, Daliet, Greco, Ducerf, Scavini et fils and to the gloves of Alexandrine, she really came to look like an Italian.

IX

LONDON

WHY DESCRIBE A HONEYMOON IN SCOTland? Glasgow is a black city, Edinburgh is a sad city, the delicate spires of whose churches look like solidified rain; the real rain falls without surcease on the mail-coaches of the country; the three basins of the Trossachs take less than half a day to traverse. The ruined memorials of Mary, Queen of Scots. and the mournful sounds of bugles and pipes are enough in themselves to give one neurasthenia. The twilight never comes to an end, and the dawn enters with impunity through uncurtained, unshuttered windows, to light up the Bible placed by the traveller's pillow.

I felt that a descent towards more voluptuous regions was indicated, and London held us for some time.

London has now fallen to the level of a large

industrial, commercial and financial town, of which any number keep springing up all over the world. But in those days it was a kind of Nordic Byzantium, with refinements of luxury and unostentatious wealth.

A race of gods and goddesses had descended from Olympus on to England and showed itself in London during June and July.

A gentle, rarefied air enveloped "the season."

A drab crowd took its pride in contemplating the rapid, never-ending, rhythmical routine of the pleasures taken, like a noble ritual, by a well-dressed *élite*, of which the theatres, the clubs and the railway-stations were full to overflowing.

High-born ladies, swaying on their eight springs, entrusted their cards to their footmen. They drove to and fro in the Park or entered beneath Adams porticos in Belgrave Square or Berkeley Square. I can still hear the trill of the bird-like pages on the pavements, whistling to stop passing "cabbies." On the smooth roads the hansoms, with their strange outline, drove the well-known profiles of clubmen from one part of the town to another.

The sight of Lord Alfred Douglas passing by

in a hansom by Oscar Wilde's side loosed in his father, the Marquess of Queensberry, the first fury which pursued the poet even to gaol.

The echoes of the Oscar Wilde case had come to my maidenly ears, but the cause of his arraignment had not been revealed to me and yet roused my curiosity. Having attempted to do a good turn to a concierge, who had implored my aid to get him reinstated in his place, my father said: "Don't mix yourself up with that business" and whispered to my mother: "A case of the Oscar Wilde sort." I racked my brains to guess what mysterious tie could link Oscar Wilde and a Paris porter.

When I reached London I bought *The Portrait of Dorian Gray* for three shillings in a pretty, mist-coloured binding, and the woman in the shop handed me the book with a sardonic smile. The marvellous description of Basil Blackwood's studio in the first pages wasn't in the least exaggerated, but indicated exactly the "temperature" of London that year.

Oscar Wilde's influence was perceptible in London, even after he had disappeared. Although his name wasn't mentioned, yet the scandal and the

genius of him were abroad in the land, and his hidden presence still gave a beauty to the atmosphere of that city, inciting to the quest of culture, elegance and idleness.

For long I was intoxicated with that flower of London civilization. The banks of the Thames, seen now from the Terrace at Westminster, now from balconies perched high up in the Savoy Hotel, where we took lunch in an iron landscape, the radiance of the flowers with which the streets were gay, all the fine folk going to dinner at nine o'clock, in order, as they got out of their carriages, the closer to resemble a Whistler, bathed as they were in the half-light of a June twilight and the electric rays sent forth from the illuminated doorways, gave that city a tincture of æsthetic calm, which has utterly vanished from Europe.

The numerous parties to which we were carried off at the end of that season took us at Taplow, where you go in boats on the river in the evening, to the Opera, where Melba and Jean de Rezke were singing their love-duets, each to one person in the audience, and the studios in Bond Street,

where Duveen and the great dealers have their places.

One morning the Duke and Duchess of Somerset invited their friends to take early breakfast on the banks of the Serpentine. The tables were set up, the powdered footmen served tea, coffee and bacon-and-eggs in the delicate light peculiar to June mornings. Near the lawns of "vernal green" (I love the word *"vernal,"* which has no ordinary French equivalent, but represents so well the special quality of the absolutely pure, angelic green of well-kept English lawns) the Somersets laughed with their guests. He was in white flannels. His wife Susan lovingly and devotedly worshipped him whom she used to call "my duke." For eight months in the year the Duchess of Somerset hunts foxes: two meets in the week, two days' rest, two days for looking after the estate, and Sunday for praying to the Lord. She was tanned like an old saddle. She has had both her collar-bones and both her legs broken, but such small occupational risks do not count. During the "season" she takes a town-house at random. Whenever I see her, she

explains that she is, at the moment, "very hard up," because she is paying death-duties—she has been doing that for at least ten years. She entertains on a vast scale, because it is the usual thing, and when we go to see her—she is by way of being a cousin of mine—she fetches out an enormous black cash-book in which her engagements are written down; she tries to find a place for us, and we can only hit on 10 A. M. on the banks of the Serpentine.

During the war, the Duchess of Somerset exhibited great activity. She was generous and devoted.

I was presented to an English lady of importance, the Duchess of Devonshire. After the exchange of a few phrases, I was filled with consternation and said to myself: "I shall really have to alter my pronunciation, for the English I talk isn't at all the same as the Duchess of Devonshire's." I learned subsequently that she was a German, which reassured me. Omnipotent and very intelligent, she was the most representative member of the British aristocracy. Her name and her wealth, the political position of her two hus-

bands, the first and the one of the moment, made her something of an English Buddha.

She was more than sixty years old when I saw her, but her age vanished beneath the aids of art: a wig made up of little fair curls framed the petal-pinkest of faces, a formidable iron corset kept her rigid and, although she took an hour to climb the stairs, she led in all respects the life of a very young woman. Balls, dinners, races, the Opera, social gatherings, charity-committees—she presided over and managed everything.

She invited me to Devonshire House, a memorable spot renowned for its gorgeous entertainments, where for a long time the pulse of English high life beat strongest, a kind of pinnacle surmounted by tiaras and diadems. I was delighted at visiting that London palace, whose railings run for a good distance parallel to those of the Park in Piccadilly. I traversed suites of innumerable reception-rooms before running her to earth in a little room of which she seemed proud, her little French boudoir—half drawing-room, half dressing-room. She received me sitting in front of a Louis XV dressing-table. She was as unlike as

possible to that sketch of Gainsborough's, which represents a powdered Duchess of Devonshire in boy's disguise. The picture hangs at South Kensington.

I never saw the Duchess of Devonshire again. For a long time she carried on the same representative existence, falling asleep in the end over her cards at bridge. When her husband died she suffered the fate of English dowagers. An iron curtain falls like a guillotine upon their life; in the twinkling of an eye they are brought low and stripped, and the new heirs get rid of them. They often depart for the Riviera. The Duchess of Devonshire retired to hotel with inclusive terms of three francs a day at Cimiez, near Nice, where she died.

The famous Devonshire House has been razed to the ground and replaced by great blocks of buildings.

What surprised me in London was quantity. In old-established French society you could hardly count more than half a score of houses run in the grand style. In London there must have been fifty. During the "season," no one, unless at the point of

death, remained at home. It was an inconceivable coming and going, starting with gallops in the Park at ten, to end with balls at three o'clock the next morning. Animal spirits in England are more impetuous than in France. It has been demonstrated that English legs move with greater velocity than ours. And this whirl carries even the ancient with it. Evening functions in London are a mass of venerable reliquaries, bewigged and covered in jewels. They go on showing themselves at an age at which Frenchwomen softly cling to the fireside and lock up their jewels in the vaults of the Crédit Lyonnais, wishing neither to put them on nor deck their heirs with them.

Politics, sport and society are harmoniously blended.

I had tea several times on the Terrace of the House of Commons, on the banks of the Thames, where elegant M.P.'s at little tables placed by the water-side continued the conversation of the lobbies. The English follow day by day the politics of their native isle. The two specialities of the country are its statesmen and its poets.

Monsieur de Clermont-Tonnerre, keeping up his

Parisian habits, used to take me to supper every evening after the play; we went to the Savoy or to Prince's Restaurant in Piccadilly until two in the morning, the hour at which a puritan ordinance stops the band and compels people to go home or else continue a little hypocritical jollification behind closed doors.

It was during those late hours, after the fifth or sixth glass of cherry brandy, while I was stubbing out my twentieth cigarette in the sticky saucer, that from my husband's stories I discovered a world undreamed of. I learned what use Frenchmen make of their youth, what women are for and a number of rather suffocating things, the strangeness of which was, however, somewhat mitigated by the atmosphere in which I listened to them.

In this way we forgot the time one evening and arrived scandalously late at the ball which Lord and Lady Rothschild were giving in honour of the Prince of Wales. The future Edward VII had gone, and I had missed being presented. My family bitterly reproached me for this lack of manners. Did I think I was at the Bal Tabarin? But this was a

case rather of pleasing my husband than of making court-curtsies. All the same, I often went afterwards to Lady Rothschild's, my mother's sister, at tea-time.

Nothing seemed more delightful to me than tea taken like that, at the end of a June afternoon on an enchanted lawn bordered by great rhododendrons cutting off Piccadilly. The din of the town was imperceptible, merely heightening the summery graces of the garden, which seemed only an extension to the Rothschilds' imposing dwelling-place. In high favour at court, much sought after, very powerful, their house was at that moment one of *the* centres of London.

Rich English people seemed really to live on a golden cloud, so great was the wealth which they indolently expended and which seemed as natural to them as that leaves should turn green; and a passive troop of footmen in well-cut liveries, with one hand always at the brim of their hats, accompanied the proud British aristocracy wherever it moved.

The sun itself surrounded itself with vapour, so that the complexions of young Englishwomen

should be the more delicate and that London might appear more softly grey.

At that period of time there was a flotilla of white swans, on whose long necks were poised small heads adorned with gems. Those masterpieces of nature were called Lady Warwick, Lady Glenconner, the Duchess of Leinster, Lady de Grey, Lily Langtry, etc. They followed in the wake of the Prince of Wales.

A Florentine æstheticism was all the rage. A group of ladies called themselves nothing less than "Souls." They made intellectualism and slimness the fashion, in reaction against the torpid corpulence of Victorian dames. Lady Sassoon and Lady Asquith were Souls. They held flowers in their hands and wore long, dimly coloured scarves, in the belief that they were imitating Botticelli. Florence was in the air, and the heroines of the *Primavera* imitated in every music-hall.

I recognized Burne-Jones's daughter there one evening. In the afternoon he had introduced her to us as such: she was acting as his model. Burne-Jones was a little old man with white hair and a sardonic smile. He ridiculed those compatriots of

his who declared that they had nothing to do on Sunday: "Fancy, nothing to do!" He received us in his studio and gave us introductions to the London houses which had pictures by him.

Burne-Jones's pictures are all alike; it was his invention to give the handsome and well-developed girls he painted an expression of mournful ecstasy, which he had picked up from the Italians of the fifteenth century, and that gave great pleasure to ladies so well fed that they are forced to invent some great grief. His colours are drab, but his draughtsmanship is good and his imagination poetic. He is a good exemplification of the dreamy, refined side of certain Englishmen, which is one of their great charms—the other being their originality.

The Baronne Deslandes had in some sort introduced Burne-Jones to Paris. She wrote an excellent article on him in *Le Figaro,* and several ladies hung upon their walls large reproductions of that photogenic painter's best works: King Cophetua, the Legend of the Briar Rose . . . , and all those great sad eyes of Florence and London opened wide upon noisy French homes.

Simultaneously, Whistler was painting at Chelsea. He is the painter of Lady Eden and other "ladies of leisure." They all have dangling arms, vague eyes and small foreheads concealed beneath heaps of curls. With Oscar Wilde, Whistler was one of the first of the æsthetes. The furniture amongst which he lived showed it.

The work of another English painter, Alma Tadema, a kind of Pompeian art, has lost its interest; but his studio was an amusing place because of his æsthetic researches. You reached it by means of a staircase made entirely of copper, and Praxiteles's Hermes dominated the situation.

An unexpected treat was in store for us in London: Sarah Bernhardt's season. We spent five afternoons and five evenings running in the theatre at which she was acting. I saw her in *Tosca, Fédora, Théodora, La Dame aux Camélias, Phèdre.*

Sardou suited her better than Racine. She was a Romantic of the style of 1875. Sarah was no column, but a rich Byzantine arabesque. She needed pearls in her hair, orchids, trains to her dresses, daggers and leopard-skins.

When I saw her in London, she was physically still extremely seductive. With her ruffled fair hair, that daughter of Jerusalem looked like a priestess who from Solomon's temple had gone over to that of Baal. Her voice was of gold, her eyes of precious stones, her suppleness feline. She was the incarnation of the feminine serpent unfolding the coils of her voluptuousness throughout the world, in turn a princess of Byzantium, a Florentine adventuress, a consumptive courtesan; in sum, she was all those who, dowered with an arsenal of allurements, triumph over men and events.

Later, with a wooden leg and the weight of sixty-five years upon her, she still commanded in *Lucrèce Borgia,* in order to persuade the Duke of Ferrara, the most haunting tones I have ever heard in a theatre. And even in *Athalie,* the last piece in which I saw Sarah Bernhardt, she emerged from the coma in which her eighty years had enveloped her, to seduce young Joas. Too tender was the movement of her head with which from her litter she bowed, to the dead tones of her golden voice, somewhat modifying the intention of Racine's dialogue,—over the young neophyte.

The spell of Sarah Bernhardt extended to America, whither her magnificent energy took her time and time again at the head of her company. Although little disposed to gaze on spectacles not of her own contriving, the great rivers of America impressed her. "How small the Seine is!" she remarked on seeing it again. When she left the ship at Panama, she took a cab and commanded: "Driver, to the Virgin Forest!"

Sarah Bernhardt's repertoire cannot be revived. She was unique, and for another hundred years thousands will try, but all in vain, to imitate her voice and her diction.

Sarah's private life,—what should I know about it? She had none! Of course, she had a son who squandered her money, a daughter-in-law, a friend, Georges Clairin, the painter, who made water-colours of her in the style of Gustave Moreau and one great portrait. . . . Besides, in the hurly-burly of her tours and her dressing-rooms, she never recognized anyone and used to call women younger than herself by a year or two "Mon Bébé" or "Mademoiselle." When Sarah Bernhardt learned of the death of Réjane: "After her," she said, "it will be

Granier,"—Granier, who was her junior by thirty years.

Every schoolboy in France was in love with Sarah Bernhardt. Gabriel Hanotaux was mad about her at that age, but did not dare come near her. During his holidays he fetched up one morning at an inn in Brittany and beheld, O joy, O rapture! Sarah Bernhardt and a mob of people setting off on a gull-shooting expedition. They had arrived the evening before from Belle-Isle. *"Faute de mieux,"* he told me, "I asked for the room in which Sarah Bernhardt had slept and rolled about voluptuously in the sheets still warm from her body."

In the end, the social routine and conventions of England bored us, and we soon experienced a novel pleasure in stretching out at full length on the pale sands of a French seaside place. The shouting of the newspaper-sellers, the ordinary bourgeois, the Casino, the *petits-chevaux,* the illustrated papers full of plump little ladies disporting themselves on beds—France, in a word.

One year I was asked to my cousins, the O'Neils. They had vast estates in the North of Ireland, near Antrim, where they owned something like forty villages scattered round a lake like the Lake of Geneva. Their seat was, in part, burnt down by the Sinn Feiners.

My cousin Louisa O'Neil looked like a Reynolds portrait. But I sometimes found her supreme gentility a nuisance when I was staying with her. If I proposed on the morrow to go and sit in Hyde Park to see the horsemen and carriages go by, it was "Only second-rate people do it;" or to take a morning walk along Piccadilly to look at the shops, she would object. I wanted to give her daughter an English book: "No, it's a book full of *double entendes.*"

She had two charming sons, Alfred and Hugh. The elder, Lord Crewe's son-in-law, died during the war, exactly three days after landing in France. Inconsolable for the loss, Lady O'Neil has never written to her French cousins since. Hugh is now Speaker of the Dublin Parliament, and we meet when he is on his way through Paris.

The Carnarvons often invited me, and I was on

pretty friendly terms with Almina Carnarvon. She combined the fiery elements of two races, her mother being French. A sort of birdwoman, she carried her despotism and her caprices from London to Paris, from Scotland to Monte Carlo. Enveloped in a cloud of tulle and feathers, she was like the hoopoe-bird of *The Arabian Nights* which swoops down on its prey from the heights of heaven. A sort of little Napoleon, Almina directs, commands and is always obeyed. She has changed the itinerary of a bus-route in order to shorten by ten minutes the transportation of her nurses; for she mingles charity with her social activities and supports several hospitals. Alfred Rothschild, her godfather, left her Seamore Place, crammed full of *objets d'art.*

Lord Carnarvon, an intelligent, refined, slightly eccentric man, had a collection of eighteenth-century things and used to take his Clodions and his Derôme bindings with him to the houses he took for the season. The English have odd ways like that. Lord Carnarvon was good-looking himself and worshipped at the shrine of beauty. He belonged to that variety of Englishmen who travel

and live much on the Continent. He had a palazzo at San Frutuoso on the gulf of Genoa. He discovered the marvellous tomb of the Pharaoh Tutankhamen, "the solitary royal vault that has come down unviolated to our own days."

Under date February 5, 1923, Dr. J. C. Mardrus, who is a son of the Orient, wrote a sensational article in *Le Matin,* from which I take some extracts:—

"As for the noble Lord who is now called the Maecenas of excavations, as for Lord Carnarvon, let him beware . . . If merely the young Pharaoh were of a sudden to lift his right hand, or if merely the terrible curse which has been found inscribed by the mummy of the Pillar of Execration were to take effect in the bosom of 'the earth which loves silence.'

" 'O ye Beings from Above, O ye Beings from Below! Phantoms riding the breasts of men, ye of the crossroads and the great highways, wanderers beneath the shade of night!

" 'And ye from the abysses of the West, on the fringes of the Twilight, dwellers in the caverns of obscurity, who rouse terrors and shuddering; and

ye, walkers by night whom I will not name, friends of the moon; and you, intangible inhabitants of the world of night, O People, O denizens of the Tombs, all of you approach and be my witnesses and my respondents!

" 'Let the hand raised against my form be naught! Let them be naught who attack my name, my foundation, my effigies, the images like unto me!

" 'The royal Urœus who lords it on my brow shall belch forth fire against their heads, and their heads shall be in the place of their feet. They shall be divested of their name, of their body, of their image, of their Ka, of their Baï, of their Kou.

" 'And such is my curse and such is my vengeance, meditated and hidden in the innermost of my bosom to all eternity.' "

And on February 4, 1924, Dr. Mardrus could enumerate the Pharaoh's other victims: George Jay Gould, Woolf Joël, Sir Archibald Douglas Reid, etc., etc.

"Now," he continued, "this tomb of 3,300 years ago, in addition to treasures of a deeply moving and never equalled art, an art which might still teach Europe a great lesson in modesty, also con-

tains, since it is intact and unviolated, all that the celebrants and masters of the funeral ceremonies had included within its ambit, as possible precautions against desecrators. I insist on this.

"It became accordingly an elementary proposition to beware of the unknown and to take certain precautions against the visible and against the invisible. But, either from negligence or from presumption, nothing was done. We are, you know, moderns, we are advanced thinkers, we have no doubts about anything. Old wives' tales and superstitions, the beliefs which had currency for thousands of years in the most intellectual civilization that ever flourished on this earth. And people forgot the profound saying of the master of us all, Pasteur, in the speech he made on being received into the Académie:

" 'He who had no doubts about anything would certainly be a fool. . . . The Ancients were aware of the mysterious power of the hidden side of life.'

". . . What would I have done, if I had been in charge of the excavations—from which Ammon has preserved me—and what precautions would I have taken to safeguard my life and the life of

those for whom I should have been responsible?

"In the first place I should have had recourse to the prophylactic agents which modern science has put in our hands to overcome the noxiousness of a dangerous habitat. I should have 'ozonized' to supersaturation, then 'sublimised' the vitiated atmosphere of the vault, in which have pullulated undisturbed for so many centuries—together with animal-skins, hangings, provisions and sacrificial offerings of all sorts—if not the actual germs, at least the indestructible spores of anthrax, the microbes of plague, the germs of erysipelas and the countless army of larvæ which inhabit the retreats of darkness. And I should, in consequence, have armed myself with several jars of serum, against anthrax, against venom, as well as antispecific. Thus should I have armed myself and discharged my duty to modern science, thus would I have calmed the scruples which I should feel as a present-day man. . . ."

Anglomania, I fancy, is on the wane; maybe it has ceased to exist.

Before the war, French people who thought themselves a cut above the average used to say: "We're going to Ascot Races." There might be fifteen or twenty of them, passing unnoticed by the English. I spent one day, a very long time ago, at Ascot. There prevailed a stylishness which seemed to me unheard of. The men didn't smoke cigars in the paddock, a thing strictly reserved for the elect accompanying "the royalties."

An Englishman, Lord M . . . , strolling about, asked me which of the Englishwomen struck me as the prettiest. I replied without hesitation: "Lady X . . . ," a long, thin Scotswoman with a transparent skin. "Ah!" replied Lord M . . . ; and we changed the subject. When I got back to Paris, my mother informed that this very Lady X . . . was Lord M . . . 's mistress. No Frenchman would have been so discreet.

The English have more pride than vanity. They also have a gift for eccentricity.

A certain C. L. . . . was embarrassed by a love-child, the paternity of which he acknowledged. His family refused to bring up the baby, whose mother had died in giving it birth. So he entrusted it to a

dear friend of his on the Continent, Émilienne d'Alençon, who had always been infected with a maternal complex. She brought it up till it was twelve years old and, taking advantage of the confidence shown her, landed one evening at C. L. . . .'s place, just as he was sitting down to dinner with a party of dowagers and politicians. Unwilling brutally to show his child's foster-mother the door, he introduced her as "La Comtesse de Beaumanoir, a charming Frenchwoman." She knew no English, the English knew no French, so they all got on perfectly well together.

But if the Englishman is original in private, his reactions in a crowd lack all gaiety. He finds it hard to divest himself of his personality, which is a necessary condition of enjoying oneself.

I have never seen anything so solemn as the Shakespeare Ball some years ago in the Albert Hall. And yet there were individuals there not wanting in a certain piquancy. Lady Cunard, as a female jester, with hardly any skirt on at all, was extremely amusing. But the private conversations I heard were nothing but commonplaces of politics and hunting. And the progress of the hours, slowly

chiming, animated the ball no more than the champagne at supper. Vercingetorix looked sadly at the time by his wrist-watch, and Charles de Polignac wandered sombrely among the groups murmuring: "To think that at this hour of night at the Bal des Quat-Z'Arts every woman would be starko."

I had another shot, at a theatrical ball. Actors enjoy much consideration in England.

After having danced with very solemn individuals who made me indecent proposals in ceremonious accents, I preferred their place to their company and, noise being as propitious to meditation as silence, dressed in my gilt armour as Saint George, I meditated gravely as I wandered by myself along the inner walls of that vast ostrich's egg known as the Albert Hall. Someone accosted me. It was the Baronne d'Erlanger, her red hair garlanded with red roses. She looked very cheerful; but she, of course, was a Frenchwoman.

English actors do modern plays badly. Unaccustomed to handling speech, they assume on the boards the voices of clergymen and become stilted. The women generally speak with a circumflex accent: the voices rise and fall with monotonous

regularity: "My life has not been a particularly happy one."

But the musical comedies, a hotch-potch of singing, dancing and acrobatics, are astonishing.

Shakespeare, too, is not properly acted anywhere but in London. The ineffable poetry of the great William blossoms like a flower at Drury Lane and fills the air with sweetness.

English actors know all about costume and scenery, because they have the sense of unreality, of fairyland. They do not imitate a forest, they suggest it. I spent a unique evening seeing *As You Like It* with Gordon Craig's scenery. The English excel also in buffoonery, and *The Taming of the Shrew,* while doleful in Paris, was uproarious in London.

The English actor can invest historical tirades with grandeur. Nothing could be more pathetic than the lamentations of Cardinal Wolsey. Banished by Henry VIII he laments over his lost power as a man laments over a mistress who has forsaken him after he has given her all.

The magnificent cardinal was a son of Oxford, for so many centuries the nursery of great states-

men. They have all passed through the quadrangles of those stern-looking colleges, and it is a moving sight to see from the top of the Bodleian tower that university with its hundred colleges, the guardians of institutions now almost a thousand years old. They are not so bad, since they have given the English that strength and that unity which, up to the present, have made her omnipotent on the face of the earth.

Those venerable institutions are accommodated in architecture which looks like a stage-setting. The multitude of spires does not, however, make up for the flatness of the façades, English stone being too poor in quality to allow of proper sculpture; in place of the reliefs and figures on our porches you find ivy and soot.

For a long time Anglo-Saxon dames wore huge tiaras that looked like chapel façades.

Blenheim, the Duke of Marlborough's Palace, is some miles from Oxford.

The Duke of Marlborough showed me, in the family archives, the letter his ancestor sent his wife, Sarah Jennings, after the battle of Blenheim, asking her to announce in her own person to Queen

Anne the defeat of Louis XIV's armies and the capture of his marshals. The Queen and the Keeper of the Robes were taking tea in the Queen's Oratory when the messenger arrived. From that day forth victories multiplied and the fortune of the Churchills was increased.

The English Parliament, drunk with gratitude, made a present of Blenheim Palace to Lord Churchill, who had become the Duke of Marlborough. His wife, beautiful, intelligent and shrewish, domineered over Queen Anne. Long did her favour endure.

Already while her husband was conducting his campaigns, the Duchess of Marlborough made sound investments abroad, profited by the exchange in the different cities of Europe, speculated and made money. Marlborough ordered *objets d'art* in France, had tapestries woven in Flanders to commemorate his victories, so that the battles of Blenheim (1704), Oudenarde (1708), Malplaquet (1709) etc., are now displayed on the walls of some of Blenheim's fourteen rooms of state.

Stacks of faded standards are planted in Chinese

vases,—of white satin, of pink satin, of maize-coloured satin, marked with the three golden lilies. A great Louis XIV drum stands at the Hall entrance. But truly those spoils of our arms do not rend the heart like the red, tattered rags, stained with mud and blood, of present-day wars. The satin flags of Blenheim Palace are the emblems of an epoch when war could be "joyous." And Louis XIV is not diminished because his bust, carved by Coysevox and taken from some French town-hall, adorns the southern façade of the house. The English clouds, more heavily swollen with rain than ours, pass indolently above his unmoved periwig.

When I wrote to the Duchess of Marlborough I took a hint from the postmark and addressed my envelope "Blenheim Palace, near Woodstock." But Lady C . . . said to me one day, carelessly: "There's no need to put Woodstock; there are only two Palaces in England, Buckingham and Blenheim." I did not realize this vision of "a Palace" until I got there.

It seems to me that Blenheim Palace is as large as that of Fontainebleau, but it is a living palace, heated by £2,500 worth of coals per annum and

served by magical domestic staff, as numerous as it is invisible.

English servants and Chinese servants preserve the same silence, which is almost nerve-racking. I heard the fire crackling in my room without having seen it lighted, the curtains were drawn and breakfast was brought up without my being wakened, and at ten o'clock *The Times* was insinuated under my eyes. When I went down to the ground-floor, a groom of the chambers would murmur: "Her Grace is in the Sir Peter Lely Saloon" or in "the Long Library."

By eight o'clock *in* the morning the lawn was rolled, the dead leaves removed and the flower-stands filled with fresh flowers.

But this majestic silence got on my nerves. A certain Gascon part of my make-up calls for noise, especially when I am in England; and those great mute corridors, those never-raised voices made me homesick for the Latin hurly-burly: servants shouting, banging pots and pans, slamming doors, —even in the neighbourhood of country-houses buried in the wilds there is the sound of agricultural occupations. By means of its "grounds,' which

extend as far as Oxford, Blenheim Palace is protected from the vulgarity of democratic noises.

In this fairy-palace, the Duke and Duchess of Marlborough keep up a state and hospitality which are almost unique in Great Britain. It is the Duke's wish to maintain unimpaired the traditions of his ancestors and his peers. "To be a duke, that is my trade." And he will fill the part assigned to him in this world as long as it will be possible for him to do so.

Silver-gilt vases modelled by Germain adorned the lunch-table one morning. The red roses, overflowing them, made a frame round the Duchess of Marlborough, so that she looked like a heroine of Shakespeare's: Rosalind in the Rose Bower. And the Duchess with her customary animation and wit entertained the Duke sitting opposite her with her paradoxes and anecdotes.

A battle has been joined between her and Blenheim Palace. There are days on which the Palace is the victor and triumphs over her; solemn and dignified she takes her walks slowly through the galleries, by the china-cabinets, beneath the ancestral portraits, or along the walks of the park,

round the lake. At other times, light as an elf she frisks across the flowerbeds, laughs, sheds sunlight on everything and passes with her dog through the court of honour, whose French paving was put down by Duchêne—and the palace is annihilated before so much grace and beauty.

X

ENTRESOL

WHY IS THIS FRACTION OF A FLAT synonymous with something agreeable? Far enough from the street not to be inconvenienced by it and near enough to capture its sounds, the little Parisian entresol, easy to warm and to furnish, has an indefinable air of gallantry and seductive intimacy. There, it appears, witty sayings are most easily brought to birth, talk is brighter and life more easy. On the doormat of the entresol the judge, the statesman, the financier, as they shake the dust from their feet, shake off care too, that other kind of dust.

An entresol is inconceivable in any other capital than Paris. When it becomes microscopic it is called "cabinet particulier."

The first entresols appeared with Balzac. Dumas the younger said: "My entresol is so low that you can't eat anything but fish in it."

The first one to which I went was that of Monsieur and Madame Émile Straus, friends of my mother's. That call gave me a foretaste of Parisian life which went to my head.

Madame Émile Straus lived in the Boulevard Haussmann, opposite the statue of Shakespeare and over Sutton, the livery-maker's, to whom the people of the Faubourg Saint-Germain sometimes owe as much as a hundred thousand francs.

Madame Émile Straus was never more captivating than in her own low reception-rooms, where the light came in softened by the winter sky or the foliage of the chestnut-trees. She was a Parisian Jewess, that is to say a Parisian twice over, only able to breathe where there was no air and catching cold if she drove to the Bois. But as soon as the electric lights went on she began to revive and make ready for holding her own with the familiars of her drawing-room.

They had to be Parisians, that is to say people charged hour by hour with the various emanations sent up by the town,—something superadded to their intelligence and their calling, whatever that might be. Monsieur Bergson is a very learned

man, a tremendous philosopher, but he is no Parisian,—nor were Pasteur and Émile Mâle. But a foreigner, Lord Derby for instance, can be a Parisian. In Madame Straus's time Lord Lytton, British ambassador and Parisian *emeritus,* came to pay his court to her. He was sufficiently proficient in all the fine shades of French to appreciate the best wit.

There was plenty of that flying about in Madame Straus's entresol. Every tone of the Parisian symphony was represented. Forain reposted on Meilhac, who came to dinner with one bootlace trailing behind him—he was too fat to tie them up himself—and told stories about pretty ladies: he had discovered the latest pink baby of Paris, Liane de Pougy, and taken her to dinner at Paillard's. Professor Pozzi was sedater; he took an interest in Hellenic studies when he had finished cutting up the tender flesh of women. Adrien Hébrard, the editor of *Le Temps,* Marcel Proust as a young man, Porto-Riche, Robert de Flers, her cousins the Genderax's, Madame de Régnier, Madame de Noailles, the daughters of Dumas the younger, Simone Le Bargy, Réjane and a host of others

brought to Madame Straus's, piping-hot, like a dish, the effluvium of what was going on in the Law Courts, in Parliament, in the Government offices, in the big newspaper-offices and, especially, in the theatres. Abel Hermant brought her his first novels, Paul Hervieu boxes for his first-nights; *Le Figaro,* that eminently Parisian paper, and *La Revue de Paris* were annotated at her parties. The theatre played a big part.

As the daughter of the composer Halévy, who wrote *La Juive,* as first cousin to Ludovic Halévy and as the widow of Georges Bizet, the composer of *Carmen,* how could she have failed to be surrounded by the life of the theatre, which bulked so large in those days?

She had married Bizet for love. Before he turned out *Carmen* the young couple were anything but rich. He gave piano-lessons, she waiting outside in a cab meanwhile.

When he died in 1875 the young widow's pale face and great pathetic eyes made a big impression on Élie Delaunay, the painter. He made a portrait of her,—certainly his masterpiece,—which represents her in Pirandellian crepe, mourning with

grief-stricken mien her beloved first husband.

She did not lack adorers.

One among them, Émile Straus, wished his enthusiasm to be shared by the Rothschild family, whom he knew very well. They succumbed to her charm instantaneously. Everyone wanted to see and hear Geneviève Bizet, and carriage after carriage blocked the Rue de Douai.

Émile Straus, *avocat* at the *Cour d'appel* was for long under her spell and regaled his friends with unending talk about her. "Émile Straus and I," Joseph Reinach told me, "used to go up to business by train every morning from Saint-Germain-en-Laye to Paris. I could have a good rest during the journey: for, without a break, Émile talked to me about Geneviève." In the end she married him, and her husband's loving care accompanied her to her last breath.

Holding old-fashioned views of woman's life, she said to a woman-friend who had lately appeared in the honours list: "The feminine chest was not made for hanging orders on."

"Do you like music?" some simpleton asked her.

"I used to hear a lot in my first family."

Many shafts of wit scattered about the dialogue of contemporary drama were picked up in Madame Straus's salon. Must some of those countless *mots* be repeated?

One day at dinner she was sitting next to Pailleron who was slandering the Ganderax's very spitefully.

Pailleron: "Don't let yourself be put out, Madame, you may say what you like about *my* friends."

"I didn't know you had any," was her reply.

On Gounod, who had described the music of a new opera as "octagonal," she retorted: "Just what I was going to say."

Of a very beautiful woman who spread with age she observed: "She is no longer a statue, but a group."

"Monsieur l'Abbé, I have too little faith to change it," she said to the priest who wished to convert her.

Madame Straus had the rare and delightful gift of fastening with her delicate feminine antennae on the latent desires of the mind and heart. She knew

what you loved, what you were waiting for, what preoccupied you; she flattered and caressed. If the old Baronne Laurie came in with stumbling feet and vague eyes, she would at once bring her the tea and cream that cheer and hand her chocolates, reminding her all the time that those excellent chocolates came from Marquis's and murmuring in a rapid whisper: "Ferrières . . . beautiful gown by Worth. . . . How are all the birds in the big aviary? . . . This is the latest picture Émile has bought. . . ."

To her Republican friends she revealed the qualities of Baron Auguste d'Arenberg, to the end that he might be appointed chairman of the Suez Canal Company. Under her breath she would read to herself Abel Hermant's last article, spread out on a table. To Flers, to Caillavet, to Porto-Riche, to Paul Hervieu she would show as in an accurate and faithful mirror a public enchanted by their pieces.

In the midst of these ambitious, influential, intelligent men she presented the antithesis of a woman whose outward aspect was careless and detached, idle and frivolous. But this attitude was

contradicted by her great black, humid eyes.

Was she a learned woman? I really don't know. In any case, she was no pedant, concerned rather with the present than the past, for which her friends were grateful to her.

She used to recite Musset's poetry. She was sentimental and in love with love, like all the women of her time. She looked on men, not as adversaries to strive against, but as loving friends of whom to ask aid and protection.

But if she had been nothing but a pretty woman, that would not have been enough to account for the magnetism which attracted to her several generations of eminent men. Geneviève Straus had natural intelligence, the gift of repartee, which is the fine flower of salon-life, and great good sense. She was, in addition, considerate and had the art of taking a passionate interest in people, of following their lives and of seeing to it that they needed her. Moreover, the epoch she lived in was a stable epoch, in which people ran neither across fields nor through their social program. For half a century she and her different circles entertained one another regularly, at fixed hours and days, in a

Paris they never left for ten months on end. Madame Straus's contemporaries had leisure for cultivating friendship. Nowadays our time is doled out to us.

The Dreyfus case was a notable event. The day Dreyfus was found guilty, Madame Straus, who was naturally an extreme *dreyfusarde,* put on mourning. She wished to see the man of the hour and greeted him with the words: "I have heard so much about you, *capitaine.*" This attitude of hers however, cost her some friends and closed some salons to her. But the social crisis through which she had passed was over, and she didn't mind.

There was a time when the Parisian *"snobs"* used to say: "Tomorrow we're dining at Geneviève's." "Geneviève—who?" "Geneviève Straus, of course."

In the summer Madame Straus used to take up her quarters at the Clos des Mûriers at Trouville, where certain friends, Monsieur d'Haussonville, the Prince Auguste d'Arenberg, Paul Hervieu, Madame de Pierrebourg, the Ganderax's, etc., came to share with her the view of the pier and her promenade on the board-walks. The garden was

so thickly planted with roses that one of the inmates of the house said: "I can come down into the garden in my pyjamas without fear of being seen." This Parisian would have caught fright in a more extensive domain.

The Clos des Mûriers, where every summer the same people used to meet again, faithfully and gladly, in a symposium of friendship, has already been turned into that symbolical craze of our time —a hotel.

As I write these lines, I learn of the death of Madame Straus. Her assiduity in friendship's cause, her courtesy, her wit have gone. Other hostesses will pour out tea and even cocktails, but they will not possess her peculiar graciousness.

People think the Parisians dissipated. What a mistake! Their pleasures and their labours are organized like a bureaucracy and without any whimsical variations contributed by themselves; they swim with the tide which, in Paris, is governed by the hours of the law-courts, the newspapers and the theatres. That special atmosphere is turned

into words, spoken in the courts, spoken in parliament, or, like a perpetual rustling, written down in newspapers, those printed conversations which reflect public opinion.

Self-communion is forbidden, or rather, if you must dream, do so elsewhere. In that bygone existence, brilliant like a crystal full of fire and softly bedded, the great conflicts let loose by the war could have no place. China, Russia, America remained "exotic." Financial schemes, industrial enterprises, the renown of great firms do not govern Society, least of all such a group of intellectuals, whose life attains its apogee in winter-time Paris, far from sports. They catch cold so easily when they leave their overheated entresols!

The theatre of the last generation faithfully reproduces the frivolous, witty environment in which the great dramas could not but be love-dramas. In those days love expressed itself oddly. It took four acts for a gentleman, after having triumphed over his rivals, to be accepted by the lady. Adultery was the infernal machine which propelled the plays, and, in general, the amorous

intrigues, discreetly and prudently conducted, were unravelled beneath Italian skies.

It strikes us as pastoral, that age without either negroes or inverts.

Love was an important matter in those days. Without going so far as Monsieur Paul Morand, who holds that love has become so boring that several must club together to make it, one can assert that present-day theatre-goers want something else. Fashion cannot modify truly passionate love, but it influences debauchery and sensual pastimes.

You have only to re-read *Amants, Amoureuse, Infidèle, Le Passé, Le Torrent, L'autre Danger* in order once more to live through those happy years of before the war.

A new play was an event, every production feverishly received, boxes and stalls filled with the most elegant public in Paris. The make-up of the house and the names of the people brought along by the beautiful Madames heightened the attraction of the first-night in question. A hubbub went up after every fall of the curtain, the comments passed from mouth to mouth and the men from box

to box, bringing to the seated women the gossip of the corridors and wings, together with *glacé* sweetmeats from Boissier's, which they ate with a pair of tongs so as not to soil their suède gloves. Verdicts were pronounced and the author discussed—sometimes to emerge a hero from the ordeal. For a month after its appearance a play was still criticized, and no detail of the setting or acting escaped the public's attention.

Paul Hervieu, a great friend of Madame Straus's, was one of the best liked dramatic authors. But in his work love is an adventure no longer, it has become middle-class and sensible, seated at the family-table. And to keep it in its place the author elaborates with his supple dialogue ingenious complications to show that woman has a right to love, to love in marriage. He strives against *La Loi de l'Homme,* with *Les Paroles restent* and *Les Tenailles,* against the husband who tears the child away from its mother. He fights also to get divorce taken out of the hands of the *Code* and to have it honestly accepted among social usages. If a first marriage fails to make a woman happy, hasn't she the right to end it and marry again? And a man too?

With the aid of Julia Bartet, Hervieu set out this situation and triumphed in countless plays.

Into the modern theatre Julia Bartet brought some of the poise of Racine's heroines and into Racine's plays some of the indiscipline of modern characters. Her diction was carefully schooled, her well-modulated voice without sudden splendours—the voice, in fact, of a very well-bred woman of the world who knows what passion is, lets people guess it, but never gives way to it in public. For long years "la divine Bartet" was the idol of Paris and the Comédie Française. Her graceful talent was somewhat limited. I see her wearing a veil and less satisfactorily wearing veils. She was unimaginable outside her Parisian setting.

"Give her Racine, she'll requite you with Paquin."

In a word, she ravished the pre-war generation.

I made Paul Hervieu's acquaintance at a little dinner-party Grosclaude had arranged in his entresol. He came to it with the Baronne de Pierrebourg, a tall, beautiful woman.

For her also Love was the dominant tone in life. She gave proof of it in throwing up everything—

and in those days the sacrifice cost something—to devote herself to the charming young man in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that Paul Hervieu was in those days, a boy with gentle manners and great, blue, dreamy eyes. She kept herself absolutely retired and lived for nothing but him. As the years went by, with her great passion for literature, she set up an academic salon.

Paul Hervieu remained attached and devoted to her all his life, writing to her daily when they were apart, which happened but rarely. After not hearing from him for two days, she concluded he was dead. It was so.

The Baronne de Pierrebourg lived at No. I*bis* Avenue du Bois and Paul Hervieu at No. 7. He brought to her house writers, academicians present and future and a few actresses. He came to see her every evening, and when there were others present she used to stand up to bid him Good evening and take a few steps to the door: "You know the way, don't you?"

Hervieu was the one love of her life, and of this touching union she made a verse-narrative entitled *La Trace de ses Pas.*

XI

THE ROTHSCHILD FAMILY

NOWADAYS RICH PEOPLE PULLULATE. YOU can't help treading on them. What is wealth? Material. But it takes King Solomon to build the Temple.

The fame of the Rothschilds is due to extraordinary qualities which have been passed on through several generations.

An altruism which is exercised anonymously for the succouring of unfortunate strangers is one of their chief virtues. They also possess this wisdom: the art of discrimination.

I have never known the Rothschilds of Vienna, but I have seen a great deal of those of Frankfort, London and Paris. They all have their own idiosyncrasies, but are cast in one mould: the family mould. Moreover none have put into more successful practice the proverb: "Unity is strength." They subordinate themselves hierarch-

ically to one another and have preserved the Jews' patriarchal sense. If one of them makes expensive mistakes—it has happened—the other members of the family come to his aid, and not a ripple of his misadventures ruffles the surface. They avoid ship-wreck and leave no flotsam about.

In accordance with an age-old instinct of their race, each one of the patriarchs stays in his tent. Until the last few years the Rothschilds never crossed a stranger's threshold.

And then what I admire about the Rothschilds is that they are genuine.

They did not fall into the vulgar error—which the children of the great Samuel Bernard were unable to avoid—of disguising their name and their religion. Created Barons in 1815 by the Emperor of Austria as a reward for services rendered, they added that title to their patronymic of the "Red Sign," "*Rothschild.*" This name has passed through the generations as an abiding synonym for strength and power, something more impressive than that of richer people—if there are any!—the Rothschilds having given their wealth something outstanding which I do not observe in any of the great middle-

class families of today. The reason is that the Rothschilds have the gifts of greatness, of state and of liberality. They instinctively make for the highest, and it is thanks to them that France has been enabled to keep some of her finest treasures; precious furniture, tapestry and plate, old pictures would long ago have crossed the Atlantic but for the Rothschilds' protecting connoisseurship. In this, as in very many other things, they were ahead of their time and in Jacob Petit's day were already hunting out the finest work of the preceding centuries.

What surrounds them remains immovable. They never give up what has passed into their hands.

The first big dinner I went to was at the Baron and Baronne Alphonse de Rothschild's. I was seventeen. My mother having a headache, my father hit on the idea of taking me. I was in mourning, wearing a little black silk blouse. The Baronne Alphonse opened her eyes very wide at my little blouse and asked my father if I didn't possess a low-necked dress.

The Baron Alphonse put me on his right. He made signs to the butler to pour our Tokay and

Romanée Conti and remarked to me: "I don't know if you're of my opinion, but I don't like carp unless it has soaked in brandy for three days."

It is the privilege of youth not to be surprised at anything. I turned up my nose at the Baron Alphonse's Tokay, appreciated his compliments and stared impudently at the people sitting at the end of the table. That night the painter Detaille was there, old Léon Say, Hallez Claparède, and some other frequent guests, racing men and clubmen, with some pretty women. The Alphonses gave a dinner-party every Tuesday.

I looked at the collection of Sèvres porcelain *rose Dubarry,* the Raphaels and Gainsboroughs and strolled about in the rooms of state. Out of the window I saw the Place de la Concorde, deserted at that hour just before the nocturnal rush at midnight. A few infrequent cabs and private carriages accentuated the stillness. Since then, the passing of motor 'buses and lorries has made the pink Sèvres vases dance, one of them to a fatal fall. The Place was cold beneath a wintry sky, and I turned back to the well upholstered, warm draw-

ing-room, with its soft carpets and deep arm-chairs. The tone was quiet, the movements discreet.

Baron Alphonse, a little shrunk with age, had white side-whiskers and affable, charming manners. The tone of his house was, on the whole, light-hearted and *mondain.* In keeping it at that pitch he received strong support from his wife, the Baronne Laurie, and his daughter, Béatrix Ephrussi.

It was his wish that nothing in the Rue Saint-Florentin should recall his financial activities. There he was a *grand seigneur,* receiving his friends and relations in a marvellous setting. The Régent of the Banque de France seemed the perfect man of leisure rather than a potentate of European finance and the head of one of the most powerful families in Paris. And that was his great charm.

Nobility of character is no idle phrase. It embellishes a figure and makes a profounder impression than one thinks. The Baron Alphonse accordingly possessed immense authority. The rectitude of his judgment and the sureness of his views made him a considerable personality.

A passionate lover of France, he proved his patriotism by countless benefactions and acts of charity.

More than another, he was in a position to measure the depth of ingratitude precipitated like lees at the bottom of the human heart and, for all his experience of life, was filled with bitterness.

The Baron and Baronne Alphonse used to spend a fortnight of August at the old Hôtel de Paris at Trouville. The Baronne Laurie was very fond of promenading on the board-walks and going to the races. Then she and her husband returned to Ferrières for the shooting-season.

Ferrières, I have heard a malicious wag remark, looked like a chest of drawers that had been knocked over. As an Englishwoman, the Baronne Laurie wanted her Hall to be like an English Hall. That of Ferrières contained such a conglomeration of objects that the human eye could no longer take them in. She herself wandered about in the park or the orchid-houses with the vague, childish air of some old queen trailing through her realms. "Once upon a time I was a dream," she used to say, "now I am nothing but a nightmare."

I knew her as an old woman, rather bent, with her hair dyed many colours ranging from rosewood to grey and with two kiss-curls on her forehead. She had two great eyes, like those of a tired gazelle and always wandering, always surprised; for she found it hard to understand the lives of those about her, so different from her own. Unduly privileged existences are by that very circumstance shut in by a Chinese wall. She no longer knew at what time of year the different flowers and vegetables began to come in. "How do you manage to get dead leaves in your park?" she once asked the Marquis de Mun, who employed fewer men to sweep them up at Lumigny than she did at Ferrières.

She still continued taking her walk round the lake as under the Empire and was surprised at meeting no one. "But where are they and what can they be doing? Ah! the women are trying on dresses," she would think to herself. Since her daughter Bettina's death she dressed very simply in little black dresses.

One day she realized with astonishment that her youth had gone and her great beauty; she ad-

mitted it quite simply: "No one will come to see me at tea-time now." And no doubt she fell a-dreaming of the days gone by.

She was prodigiously absent-minded, and at the races I have known her to fan herself with a fork she had carried away from the lunch-table while thinking of something else. After a game of cards at the Rue Saint-Florentin a gentleman who was not too well-off had won twenty francs of the Baronne at bezique. He wanted his twenty francs and gently insisted on them. The Baronne had no money on her. She rang the bell and, when the footman came, had forgotten what she had rung for. The poor gentleman consoled himself with the thought of the good dinner he had eaten.

The list of people whom the Baron and Baronne Rothschild helped with money in the course of their long lives must, I think, be a lengthy one. There were, for that reason, some very proud people who hesitated to become friendly with them; for it is tiresome always to be giving thanks and nothing else.

The Baronne Laurie was never so happy as when

she was able to go back to England, to visit her cousins and her brother, Lord Rothschild.

When she felt the approach of death, she was determined to carry out the rites prescribed by her faith. She got up, went into her *cabinet de toilette* and proceeded to the ritual ablutions, sprinkling herself with cold water according to the law of the Hebrews. She refused her children's help, who stood watching her, overwhelmed.

Her daughter Béatrix married Maurice Ephrussi. He was a friend of her parents rather than her's, and plain into the bargain. She had the world at her feet, but disdained it and preferred to marry "Frousse," as she called him. She was a delightful woman, and her hair went white at the age of twenty, which made her look as if it were powdered. As she always wore pink dresses, she seemed everlastingly on the point of going to a fancy-dress dance.

She was even further removed from reality than her mother. Capricious and commanding, she had houses built and pulled down in the South of France, on the rocks of Beaulieu, ordered planta-

tions to be moved, demanded that flowers should grow in the blast of the Mistral, forgot her guests or left them to their own devices, in order to go to the Hôtel de Paris at Monte Carlo, where she spent countless afternoons round the green baize. In Paris she kept a poker-table,—needless to say with plenty of good custom,—but the family kept an eye on her and were able to get rid of players whose luck held too long.

She had aviaries in her town house, and her manicurist had orders, if kept waiting, to cut the canaries' claws. She used to choose the hours at which she proposed to travel by train regardless of time-tables.

In sum, she was the type of pretty woman whose mission it is to resist the stupid laws of good sense. Her last caprice was to sue for a divorce from her husband, who was seventy years old at the time.

Her brother, Baron Édouard de Rothschild, still keeps pretty closely to the old traditions of the Baron and Baronne Alphonse.

His wife, Germaine de Rothschild, receives with a becoming smile and puts on an abstracted look

when the conversation turns on the pictures in the Rue Saint-Florentin. "I can't remember now whether that is a Raphael; I must ask Édouard."

Édouard likes to be surrounded by his kind—when they happen to be pretty women. He has inherited his father's financial talents, and Poincaré availed himself of his counsel in order to rehabilitate the franc at the time of the "crisis" of 1926. Baron Édouard goes down every day to the Rue Lafitte to look after the business, and there he meets his cousin, Baron Robert, a great worker.

Baron Alphonse had two brothers, Edmond and Gustave. All three lived in Paris and, together, managed the bank in the Rue Lafitte.

The Baronne Gustave, née Anspach, the first Baronne de Rothschild who was not her husband's cousin, was the exact opposite of her cousins Béatrix and Laurie. Practical and intelligent, she busied herself with every detail of her vast homes —the mansion in the Avenue Marigny and the château of Laversine in the *département* of L'Oise. She was up at seven in the morning, looking after things and directing. Her friends used to call her Gustava and were very fond of her; for

she was generous and cheerful, if sometimes a little brusque. President Carnot's funeral procession was to pass her garden, which faced that belonging to the Élysée. She sent out invitations to see it go by. One lady, in the belief that she was going to a garden-party, came in sky-blue. The Baronne Gustave literally dressed her down and turned her out of the place. There was always plenty of animation where the Baronne Gustave was, and she was greatly helped by her three daughters: Lucie Lambert, Aline Sassoon and poor Juliette Léonino, who died at the age of twenty-three as the result of a riding-accident. Lucie and Aline were the first women to be qualified by the noun "intellectuals." They had a liking for study and hard reading.

Aline even enlisted among the Souls in London.

When I went to Laversine with my mother, we always thought we had fallen in with a crowd; but it was just the mother and three daughters, arguing so passionately that their voices penetrated to us a long way away.

Robert is now the only representative of the Baron and Baronne Gustave's family. I remember him as little more than a boy, running up the

stairs of our house in the Rue de Chaillot to tell my brother the great news: "I've got a mistress."

The Baron and Baronne Edmond de Rothschild have always lived much to themselves. The fancy took them to go up the Amazon as a family-party —the Baron, the Baronne, their daughter Myriam and the latter's governess. For weeks they sailed about together in strange lands.

The Baron Edmond's collections are as celebrated as his connoisseurship. Among other things, he owns the finest drawings of the eighteenth century. Though a Member of the Institut, he is also what one may call a lavish donor. He recently gave thirty million francs to the Institut Biologique— and I pass over other instances of the sort. When war was declared in 1914 he immediately placed 80 millions at the government's disposal.

His health is bad, and, a second Louis XIV, he never lets his Fagon leave him.

The Baronne Edmond has simple tastes. With a large straw hat on her head and dressed in a linen frock as pink as the cheeks in which once the

dimples smiled, she loves to pick flowers in the meadows and meet her husband at the station when he returns from Paris.

They have three children: Myriam, who is a misanthrope, James Armand, who is a misanthrope, and lastly Maurice, the most rackety and ubiquitous of the Barons de Rothschild.

Maurice is my favourite. He amuses me because of the way he hides his considerable intelligence beneath a vague, *distrait* manner; if necessary, he will stammer and be at a loss for a word. He managed to win the affection of his aunt Julie, who made him her heir. He possesses the famous gallery in the Rue de Monceau, with the ceiling painted by Giulio Romano; full of glittering show-cases it recalls the Galerie d'Apollon in the Louvre. In the other appartments—well padded, according to the Rothschild custom—Houdons, Falconets and Clodions rise on pedestals, and the walls are adorned with Bouchers, Nattiers, Greuzes and Hubert Roberts. In fine, no monarch is surrounded by such splendour.

Maurice is the owner of bloodstock and often wins a race. He entered Parliament, being am-

bitious to do so in spite of the Baron Édouard, who had no wish to be a député's father, and has been a success there. He is popular and carries weight in the Lower House.

He entertains a good deal, in fact a great deal, his house being open to French and English politicians, to members of the Académie, to beautiful women and the *gratin*. He knows how to show himself absent-minded with a good grace and a feigned simplicity which put all his guests at their ease and enable them to enjoy themselves. His cousin, Lady Crewe, the wife of the British ambassador, laughs at his sallies. The Berthelots, sitting side by side, say nothing but look happy. Balfour talks about the weather to avoid talking politics. The Princesse Pierre d'Arenberg, pretty and distinguished, covered with heavy diamonds, replies in a thin, musical voice to the Italian ambassador. Boni de Castellane points out to Flament the architectural shortcomings of the place.

In his youth, Maurice, alias Momo, was a very good-looking boy. Somewhat filled out nowadays, he has the appearance of a rajah.

To get him out of the way of the costly embraces

of the ladies of Paris, his parents sent him out to explore Abyssinia. He almost died of dysentery and lost all his hair. As his black porters were bringing him down to the coast, they met the caravan of an Ethiopian princess. He invited her to share a haunch of antelope and to spend the evening beneath his tent. The doctor entrusted with the care of his health interrupted the *tête-à-tête:* "My dear boy, this princess of yours can't be wholesome; do look out for yourself, I implore you." The princess was cross-questioned and did effectually reply that she had had v . . . d . . . , but was now cured. To keep the physician quiet, he was given the maid. Unhappily, *she* was not cured, and the poor doctor died of it.

Among other members of the Rothschild family who lived in Paris mention should be made of Alphonse and Nathaniel, cousins to the three brothers, Alphonse, Gustave and Edmond.

I only just saw Baron Adolphe. He was a frivolous, gallant old beau and died when I was still

a child. But I often went to his widow's, Aunt Julie, who liked to see company. She was not handsome, for all her fair wig, but remarkably intelligent and very well-informed; she used to smoke fat cigars as she read the reviews. She had also a passion for photography and made me pose before her cameras. In spite of her many professional helpers, I prefer Man Ray.

I was impressed by one of her salons, which was entirely Louis Seize. In fact the very perfection of its Louis Seize quality would prevent that room from ever really belonging to the epoch.

When I was at Lausanne, taking my little girls to see Dr. Combes, the Baronne Adolphe used to come and see me in her yacht. She had the habit of crossing the Lake of Geneva in every direction, in order to convey boxes of grapes from her vineries to inhabitants of the water-side. She had an estate at Prégny, and her house formed a pleasant meeting-place. The Princesse de Brancovan came from Amphion, the d'Haussonvilles from Coppet, Monsieur Tronchin from Bessinges.

All Europe used tò stop with her. The Empress

of Austria was on her way to lunch precisely at Prégny when she was assassinated on the landing-stage at Geneva.

The Baronne Adolphe used to like going in trams and mixing with the crowd. Dressed on those occasions in an old-fashioned mantle and a black straw bonnet she looked like any other old body. The paradox caused her amusement.

She had an aquarium full of blue trout fed daily on an ox's heart and would allow a whole year to go by without looking at those living turquoises, but liked them to be there. Having no children of her own, she made her nephew Maurice de Rothschild her heir.

The Baronne Adolphe was the sister of the Baronne Willie, of Frankfort.

Nathaniel left a widow, the Baronne Nathaniel. She was a very old woman when we went to see her at her Paris house, which has become the Cercle Interallié.

Very gifted, she had, in her youth, worked at her

music with Chopin and at water-colour painting with Eugène Lamy. Lamy has always been the Rothschilds' favourite painter. She painted flowers and cats with Lambert; and played to admiration upon the piano right until the day when gout paralyzed her fingers.

She always used to complain exaggeratedly of one part of her body which happened to be giving pain. If you asked after her head, she would give you a bad account of her toes.

She was bored in Paris, she was bored at the Abbaye des Vaux de Cernay.

Those gouty old multi-millionaires, who wander about their lonely palaces always make me sad; nothing emphasizes more strongly the malignity of fortune and the ultimate equality of men's destinies. The glamour of those beings walled in by their wealth, beneficent and proud, envied and secluded, enveloped in mystery, makes them akin to the great Hebrews, to King Solomon, to the patriarch Abraham, to Rachel and Rebecca of beauty compact. They are made up of the Orient, with its pomp and its rites. An Occidental myself, I have

always felt the attraction of those who have sprung from the depths of antiquity and still keep the Law of Moses.

The Baronne Nathaniel had two sons, Arthur and James, who married Thérèse, my mother's sister.

The Baronne James de Rothschild lived not far from her sister in incongruous, because intended only as temporary, quarters, in which were housed the Baron James's collection of old books, one of the finest libraries in Paris.

Early left a widow, the Baronne James devoted herself to philanthropy, which, happily and unhappily for her, satisfies and exceeds that need for incessant activity which is the Rothschilds' family-characteristic. Her house is a government office. In the morning, the humbler petitioners are distributed among the reception-rooms on the ground-floor. If round about eleven o'clock you go to call on Aunt Thérèse, the servant opens the door of one room already encumbered with three rows of people in black. He opens a second door—those are

the employees of the Nord Railway Company and their families. In a third room there is the Roman Catholic clergy. The directors of hospitals are upstairs. The family is obliged to wait in the hall.

And the Baronne James goes the round of all those on whom she proposes to shower her benefits. She gives dowries to young girls, chocolates to old ladies, theatre-tickets to people up from the country, beds to hospitals, money.

In the afternoon she receives another set of petitioners, more difficult to please, because the Baronne has to guess what it is they need. They are ruined gentlewomen, persons suffering from temporary embarrassments, etc. Towards four o'clock she goes out, to make innumerable purchases. She has promised X . . . a fowl, Z . . . a writing-desk, presents to the children of the station-master at Chantilly. She delivers in person funds, clothes and food, visits the sick, makes a tour of the dispensaries. The Jewish population of the fourth arrondissement in Paris (which is very large) receives all its relief from the Rothschild family—which the maire finds an embarrassment with his Catholic electors.

At Berck-sur-Mer the Baronne James has a children's hospital. She was the first to support Dr. Callot's labours. Gouvieux in L'Oise is full of her crèches. She keeps herself fully posted about her patients' surgical operations and knows their temperature-charts. It is not surprising that at the end of one of her strenuous days she should exclaim: "My poor head!"

December is given over to New Year's Gifts. She directs the distribution of the presents herself and replies personally to the innumerable letters which she receives.

The habit has been formed. She could not now do without this incessant activity. The holidays she takes weigh heavy on her hands, and even her temper changes—so her daughter has told me—when she removes from the atmosphere of her labours.

She is now eighty years old and twice every year goes to visit her sister Lady Rothschild, who is eighty-two. I like to evoke the picture of those two Biblical figures journeying one to the other, like two patriarchs burdened with years, tradition and virtues.

Need I add that the Baronne James is very imperious? One would be that at least after such an amount of managing.

On Saturdays she entertains a matter of fifty old people, and does the same when she is at Chantilly. Indefatigable, she conducts them past her show-cases full of liturgical objects or through her park. One of them always whispers to me when I go to Les Fontaines: "Do take your aunt into the drawing-room. We should be so comfortable there." The poor ladies yearn for the great padded arm-chairs.

The Baronne James has a passion for arm-chairs. She has them everywhere, even in the railway-carriage which takes her from Chantilly to Paris.

Her way of life suits her: her health is excellent.

Uncle Arthur—to adopt the family-phraseology—was a misanthrope. He was always afraid of not being loved for himself alone. One merry evening he went home with a woman and was taken ill at her place. She looked after him nicely, not knowing that a golden calf had crossed her threshold.

Touched, the Baron Arthur lived with her for long years. The legend goes—but it is a sceptical legend —that while the Baron lay in his swoon the lady examined his note-case and grasped whom she had to do with.

At Frankfort lived the Baronne Willie de Rothschild, known for a successful volume of music which she published. She was a kind of Duparc in the days when Patti sang: *"Si vous n'avez rien à me dire . . ."* and *"Rose au bois, viens avec moi,"* which the ears of long ago wearies as little of hearing as ours do of *"Dans mon cœur dort un clair de lune."*

Her daughters were the Baronne Edmond de Rothschild and Minka Goldschmidt.

Fixed in Frankfort by her marriage, Minka looked like a pretty, invalid Japanese in exile. She envied the lot of her cousins who were established in France, and yet her husband was a handsome, sympathetic man of overflowing vitality.

The Baron and the Baronne Charles always lived at Frankfort—the Baron was a member of the Diet

and greatly vexed when he was not re-elected. The taciturn man was never seen except through the glasses of his brougham. To the company of human beings he preferred that of works of art: they are less deceitful.

The Baron Charles was a formidable worker; they found him dead, lying over a column of figures. He had seven daughters: Adélaïde, Anna-Louisa, Thérèse, Clémentine, Emma, my mother, and Berthe de Wagram.

When the Baron Salomon was sent to Frankfort to marry one of his cousins, he kept on saying: "It's all one to me which, it's all one to me." He was a bit of a rip, playing ducks and drakes with the money. In the end he married Adélaïde, my mother's oldest sister. On his wedding-night he had great difficulty in getting the young Baronne down from the top of a wardrobe, where, in her fears, she had gone to roost.

The Baron Salomon died young, and his widow retired to her house in the Rue Beaujon, where she lived like a Buddha in the recesses of his temple. She was a ferocious Israelite and would not countenance her sisters' Catholic marriages. I

never knew her, but she was pointed out to me as she passed in her well-padded brougham. I beheld a sculptural profile, as white as the host.

She was the last to drive behind her own horses in Paris.

I have often put myself the question what she did with the half-century she spent in the Rue Beaujon. She saw no one but her sister the Baronne James de Rothschild and Professor Albert Robin. She quarreled with Hélène, her only daughter, because she too had married a Christian, the Baron van Zuylen de Nyevelt.

The Baronne Salomon left her house to the City of Paris. Into it the municipality moved another bequest, Jacques Doucet's art-library. The Baronne and the coutourier had, unknown to themselves, collaborated in a "creation" which has not its equal in the universe. The intelligent distribution of the book permits anyone to pump up in less than five minutes the information he requires.

Thérèse is the Baronne James de Rothschild. As for Emma, she became the wife of her cousin Na-

thaniel, created Lord Rothschild by Edward VII, whose friend he was. He was the head of the great London bank.

Everyone knows the origin of the latter. In 1815 one of the brothers Rothschild was among the first to hear of the French defeat at Waterloo; he sped to London in his own private conveyances and bought up, hand over fist, all the English stocks, which had fallen to zero.

Anna-Louisa never married and remained, so they say, attached to her native city by minor love-affairs. When she died, a room was found full of dressing-cases and travelling-bags, intact, but their elastic sides relaxed with age. All that hand-luggage stood for journeys she had dreamed of and perhaps had not dared to undertake.

Clémentine, beautiful, artistic and romantic, only lived to be twenty.

In this year of grace the young Rothschilds go motoring . . . like everybody. . . .

XII

ANCY-LE-FRANC

WHEN I ARRIVED IN FROWNING BURgundy, in order, 125 miles from Paris, to get out of the train at the station of Ancy-le-Franc, where the expresses do not stop, I had the feeling—and expressed it too—of going into a vault. And what a vault!

Ancy-le-Franc has nothing about it of a "pretty château or a smiling château"; it couldn't call forth a song, but it is the finest bit of architectural inspiration extant in France, the purest and most homogenous structure. No private person (that I know of) possesses its like, and I think I know almost all the châteaux of France. There are others nearer to Paris more comfortable, but with the lapse of time even the austerity of the place has come to please me. The old towers of Jocelyn in Brittany are agreeably romantic; the two façades of Champlâtreux are the flowers of the Île de

France; Ancy-le-Franc, harsh and magnificent, approaches perfection.

The Middle Ages still envelop the four sharp arrises of its powerful quadrilateral, constructed for defence during the first quarter of the sixteenth century. The North gate, protected by a bridge and ditches, opens its narrow double door in the middle of a long façade on to an inner platform, surmounted by a stone balcony—which makes a decorative pediment. A square courtyard resembles that of the Palazzo Farnese, Michael Angelo's conception being modified in accordance with the demands of the Burgundian climate. Besides, isn't Ancy-le-Franc built on the road to Italy?

This house is a villa constructed by a Clermont-Tonnerre, who was governor of the province, in order to receive the nobility and notables of the country. Possessed of taste, time and money, he had Serlio carry out the plans of Primatice and Nicolà del Abbate. I prefer Ancy-le-Franc to Fontainebleau a thousand times.

The painted galleries and vast antechambers were designed both for receiving armed retainers

and inaugurating in France a softer mode of life against a pleasing background.

How can one be bored in so beautiful a spot as Ancy-le-Franc? Well, as a matter of fact, I did get bored there, terribly bored even. And my husband was bored. And my father-in-law was bored. Is that a confession, that an atmosphere of beauty does not by itself make for happiness?

Architecture is always the shell of a man. As soon as it ceases to be stuck to him and he floats about in it, he feels uneasiness and a draught. *"Guarda e passa."* To live amid those great traces of the past is often equivalent to stagnating in time and space.

In the summer we used to dine at seven, because of my sister-in-law, who was still a child, and chiefly because the cook liked to go out for a cycle-ride in the cool of the evening. By eight o'clock, waiting for night, we were sitting, a family-party, on the large stone balcony overlooking the entrance-court, with its grass-plots laid out lozenge-wise and the three hedges of trees surrounding it. We watched the country-folk who were continually

passing by across the courtyard. It made a small diversion.

"Next summer, we'll go to Norway and visit the fjords in Gordon Bennett's yacht."

Another evening I meant to go to Canada or to Poland. Confined by my stone balcony I threatened the family-routine with a thousand travelling-plans.

As long as the sun shone, life out of doors seemed to me unbearable. Fields stretching away, quarries, roads lined with stumpy trees made walking a hard business; it mattered little whether you took the road to Nuits-sous-Ravières or that to Ancy-le-Libre. What did give me pleasure was to follow the tow-path by the side of the Canal de Bourgogne, to see the unruffled, soundless water turned green by the reflection of the poplars and to watch the barges and rafts go by on their way to Nevers. The V of the lock-gates widened out before them, making the wan water angry and effervescent. The levels attained, the barge passes through, the lock-gate is shut, and the water goes to sleep again.

The country to the left and right of this water is sad and colourless. Only the chalk-pits torn out of the soil dot it with a glaring white.

During the daytime, accordingly, I liked to stroll about the house rather than the park, and to such purpose that in the end I created an atmosphere in which boredom became a thing in itself. It radiated. I got to the point of analysing it, then of savouring it, at last of loving it:—so much so and so strongly that an unexpected visit made me forsake my lethargy with real reluctance. Since the signs and activities of life were definitely abrogated, let the doors of my vault fall to upon me heavily! Why be concerned in the trivial interests bound up with château-life, which in very many cases are but a deceptive show of life? Better to plunge into Ancy-le-Franc as into a tepid bath and doze there indefinitely.

I used to listen to the courtyard clock strike the hours and roam about all the galleries and bedrooms.

On leaving the dining-room (in the style of Charles X), we went down into the Guard-Room, where one could make up a bridge-table in each

of the window-embrasures. As we played billiards, we could read all round the room: *"Vive le Roi, Vive le Roi. C'est mon Plaisir;"*—an inscription put up in honour of Henri III, who stopped at Ancy-le-Franc on his return from Poland; and we avoided looking out of the windows at the lime-stone hills bleached with the excavations of the Polliet-Chausson cement-works, which came right up to the park walls.

Thought covers a big expanse between Henri III and Polliet-Chausson, and I endeavoured to survey it all, without, however, being always successful in making the "joins."

The library stopped short at Schiller and Goethe. But why, suddenly, in the middle of an August afternoon, should I take an interest in Childe Harold or Don Carlos? It was an impossibility. No one can read epic poems and German tragedies on the spur of the moment. The pages of Moreri and Père Anselme interested me more. I delved in genealogies and followed up step by step those of the knights slain by the English at the battle of Crécy in 1346.

I resolutely put on one side the records of the

many deeds and activities of my contemporaries. I didn't like to read in *Le Figaro* that Madame Moore had given a big dinner at Deauville, that Monsieur de Saint-Alary had won the Omnium, that the President of the Conseil Général for Seine-et-Oise had had such-and-such a vote passed, that people had won championships, that others were bathing in the sea and even getting drowned in it, that President Krüger and the Emperor of Germany had exchanged telegrams.

No, all those people were less real than those whose effigies and genealogies alternated upon the walls and whose deeds were commemorated in ancient parchments.

I used also to go to the "Galerie de Pharsale" to see Louis XIII, sad and beautiful under his melancholy black wig and his royal-blue doublet. He is musing while Roman soldiers, in yellow ochre and half naked, skirmish on every side of him. I gazed at the full-length portrait of Claude Catherine de Clermont, a learned and erudite person who looked like Catherine de Medici. I walked over parquet floors glistening with the unctions lavished on them for three hundred years, which

embalmed the room and induced the sun condescendingly to linger over them. What a pity, I thought, that my mother-in-law does not see fit to give me that beautiful Louis XV chest of drawers, which stands too near the stove and has, consequently, cracked here and there. However, the furniture does, after all, belong to her!

The "Chambre des Fleurs" was such a lovely room that a heap of people, I knew, would be enchanted to spend a couple of days in it. Nothing was lacking: there was soap and Eau de Cologne in the *cabinet de toilette* and a supply of pens in the pen-tray. But then, if people did come, they would disturb this meticulous order. And that is what my mother-in-law loved, order! From morning to evening she was walking about the château—an excellent thing for the health. From North to South she went and from East to West. I have never seen a château better kept.

Guests would break the silent spell; in any case they could not equal those amazing apartments. In the "Chambre des Fleurs" steel-blue love-in-a-mist alternated with red tulips and white lilies. This undesigned tricolour was agreeable to look at

and endlessly repeated as high up as the coffering of the ceiling.

All the ceilings had gilded coffering, painted with devices, geometrical figures and allegorical emblems like that of Diane de Poitiers and Henri II: *H. D., H. D.* . . . Diane de Poitiers often came to our château. She was sister-in-law to a Clermont.

No one knew the genealogies like my mother-in-law. She studied them all day and explained to me how the descendants of Julien de Clermont-Thoury of a sudden vouchsafed to call themselves Clermont-Tonnerre. "O, those wicked people, calling themselves Clermont-Tonnerre, when they were nothing but Clermont-Thourys!" The Clermont-Tonnerres brought an action against them, which they lost, because, before the proceedings had begun, one of them had heedlessly addressed envelopes directed to the latter by the name of Clermont-Tonnerre.

In the evenings my mother read aloud an old work of edification called *The Life and Death of the Marquise de Clermont-Tonnerre*. That was my title at one time, before my father-in-law's death,

and I would placidly listen to the recital of my own last moments. Or she would bring to life again her grandparents, who had lived at Ancy-le-Franc, told of their habits, how the Guard-Room swarmed with old ladies, who wore silk gowns, had their hair brushed smooth and held tapestry-work between their fingers; they were re-covering the furniture with it, while the cleverest embroidered chasubles. The men were dressed in black cloth, had forelocks, wore their watches over their corporations and read *Le Constitutionnel*. I don't know how it is, but political discussions throughout the ages are all alike; there is a slight weakening of the expressions, but the phraseology remains the same.

I read countless pamphlets over and over again; one of them was devoted to the floor-tiles of the Guard-Room which had been entirely restored by my father-in-law on the pattern of a fragment remaining in one corner. And from the Muniment Room I carried away in "Pasteur Fido" armfuls of manuscripts into which I would dip. "Pasteur Fido" is a cabinet with two little solid gold doors, decorated all over with wonderful gilded oak carving and surmounted by Italian paintings on can-

vas representing the shepherd Fido's amours after Guarini's poem.

There we were in the Italy of the fifteenth century, but as a substitute for cardinals, it is the curé of Ancy-le-Franc who is announced.

"Take Monsieur le Curé to the Roman Emperors."

And in front of the busts of the Cæsars, Monsieur le Curé would ask me to hand round the bag next Sunday at high mass.

I returned to my "Pasteur Fido" to look at the manuscripts with a magnifying glass and rummaged in several centuries of rigmaroles possessing no further interest than to attest that at the end of the fourteenth century a Sieur X . . . , stout and well-liking, had bought three acres of land from Sieur V. . . . I would stretch out for a little on Cardinal Richelieu's bed, whose counterpane and tester, as was meet, were scarlet. According to the weather, I would have my tea brought out to the garden-house on the island or have a bath made ready in the Council-Chamber. Faggots were brought and fires lit as for a witch-burning. The preparations for such a bath took an hour,

and processions of waiting-women crossed the courtyard bearing dress-gowns, slippers and perfumes.

My mother-in-law could never understand why I preferred tea on the island to tea in the dining-room. I used to row the footman over with his tray and finish the afternoon in a great Louis XIV saloon pierced by four windows with balconies overhanging the pond. One ought, seated on a stone bench, to have made pencil drawings on that island, as they did round about 1800.

I dreamed of a great entertainment by night, with boats full of Chinese lanterns and Bengal lights illuminating the garden-house and the façade of Ancy-le-Franc,—but there would have been no guests, because in summer the *département* was deserted.

And my two little girls, Béatrix and Diane, played about the château and slept in the Chambre du Zodiaque. The signs of the twelve constellations jutted out over their heads, their faded poppy-red colours half obliterated. That room had not been restored with the rest of the château.

To put it briefly, my father- and mother-in-law were heroic. They devoted themselves to Ancy-le-Franc as to an idea or a cause. They sacrificed a fair-sized fortune in order to maintain, repair and keep in good condition that stone jewel that Destiny had bestowed on them and, like the Vestals of old, they perpetually fed the traditional, everlasting fire:

". . . puis à moi, Jean, transmis . . ."

They did it with a simplicity and dignity which I now admire. They were good, gentle and polite, and, assuredly, towards them I was neither good, nor gentle, nor polite. I am sorry for it now, it is the one regret of my life.

A few years later the rhythm of our torpid summers was altered, and we would arrive at Ancy-le-Franc at the beginning of autumn in order to enjoy the pleasure of company in the neighbourhood. My father- and mother-in-law made that month of October which we spent with them a sacrifice unto the Lord. The house was ransacked from attic to cellar, the servants harried, if not

discharged, the hours of meals completely changed; we always took them by surprise with our sudden departures for Paris or elsewhere; we criticized their mode of life, discussed their opinions. I used to come late to the weekly mass which was said on Thursdays in the château chapel. Often, too often for my mother-in-law's taste, we brought guests and friends with us, whom she conducted over the house and explained, perhaps at unnecessary length, the genealogies to. No one dared slip away. But when by way of a finale she proposed: "Would you like me to show you the family-saints?" it was with a tinge of amusement that the party would go off to look at Saint Amédée de Clermont.

My father-in-law hardly left his chair, but if a pretty girl came to go through the rooms of Ancy-le-Franc he would offer her his arm and walk her about the whole day without fatigue. In this fashion Jeanne de Guitaut took him in tow with a youthful crowd as far as the highest ruins of Roche-Pauvre, which he climbed like a young man, galvanized, as he himself declared, by the sight of that young person's muscular calves. The modern

deficiency of skirts has done away with this variety of seductiveness.

The Archbishop of Sens once came to Ancy-le-Franc.

"What shall we do with him after dinner?"

"To make no change in our program will be the best way of entertaining him."

That evening we rehearsed a play which we were to do at Tanlay in a few days' time. His Grace was delighted.

He was so rather less when he was being whirled along rather too quickly in the motor-car that was to take him to Tanlay and asked if the road were safe.

"There is nothing to fear, Monseigneur, since we are not taking the tow-path."

At that moment, my husband, who was at the steering-wheel and, as usual, driving at top speed, made a sudden turn, left the high road and took to the tow-path. We skirted the edge of the water, we jumped over cordage. A holy terror overcame his Grace. I had a pre-vision of his violet suit flattened beneath the crimson car.

We arrived at Tanlay without mishap.

How often have I pronounced, during my sojourns in Burgundy, the name of Tanlay and what abundant hospitality I have enjoyed at the hands of the Marquis de Tanlay!

Four times a week we used to leave sombre Ancy-le-Franc to junket with our friends and neighbours, the Marquis de Tanlay, his sister Suzanne and his mother, the youngest of the three.

I have never met a more hospitable trio; that kind of French hospitality exists no more. In his capacity as Conseiller-Général the Marquis de Tanlay used to give great feasts during the autumn, in which the old French life of plenty was perpetuated. It is a fact that feasting predisposes to good humour and that the fumes of wine stifle care.

The Marquis de Tanlay's table and cellar were unparalleled, his own appetite robust. On coming in, he would go into the kitchens to encourage the chef and run over the menu. Consignments of all sorts were unloaded there: fat pullets from Le Mans, fish from the Boulonnais, game from his own estates, celebrated pasties. He had his own recipes; I recall a certain hare *à la Royale,* pheas-

ant quenelles and ortolans cooked in truffles. Fifty-year-old wines circulated rapidly round his board, while brandy a hundred years old flowed in abundance. In order to warm it to the right degree, Madame de X . . . did not shrink from placing the little glass in the centre of her opulent décolleté before presenting it to the master of the house.

It is an impossibility to eat so much in 1926. The cold air of Bungundy, which penetrated right into the château, permitted such excess.

Cards and theatricals formed the favourite amusements of the evening. In the afternoon the women played croquet and the men slaughtered wild boars. People came long distances to spend a night at Tanlay. They came from Sens, from Joigny, from Villeneuve-sur-Yonne, from Saint-Florentin. A two hours' railway journey did not scare off those hardy natives, always assured of compensation for their change of habitat.

The great old rooms were too high in the ceiling, but, to make up for that, the alcoves were very snug indeed, and there was no idling in them, I fancy. There was a certain little dark and pretty widow who travelled between Tanlay and the Arch-

deacons at Cheney and kept the bachelors amused. Overstimulated by the good cheer, the latter used to become sentimental about themselves and tell of their deeds of prowess. The men of that time attached such importance to them that they loved to record details with an imagination as poor as it was precise.

"You see this horseshoe set in seven fine pearls. The ambassadress of X . . . had the tie-pin made up for me as a souvenir."

Another gentleman combined generosity with vain-glory. He took a lady to the Hôtel Frascati at Le Havre,—that Terminus of those days,—sacrificed eight days and eight nights to her and, as a souvenir of the joust, presented her with a necklace of forty magnificent pearls.

At the château of Cheney, a few miles from Tanlay, Edmond Archdeacon ate nothing but macaroni. He was a fair man, slightly tall and melancholy, with those blue eyes full of Utopian dreams so dear to the Irish from whom he was descended.

He organized battues of partridges and rabbits, at which he himself played an indifferent part, since he frequently did not accompany his guests, either from fatigue or, perhaps, from prudence: for he invited a great number of Parisian voters, and one day from the front-door of Cheney we saw an important tradesman of the Avenue de l'Opéra setting out in brand-new clothes from head to foot, with a brand-new gun and a brand-new game-bag. "I am going shooting for the first time," he announced proudly.

I liked Edmond Archdeacon very much. He talked gracefully and easily and told me about his political ideas. . . . He had twice stood for the Lower House in Burgundy, but had been unsuccessful because too amiable to please the Burgundian peasants and wine-growers. He fell back on Paris and, carried along by the Nationalist tide, was elected member for the first metropolitan *arrondissement,* where they hailed him with invincible enthusiasm. For a long time past he had been the life of the patriotic leagues of the moment: the Ligue de la Patrie Française and the Ligue des

Patriotes. These leagues carried on as long as there were some rich Nationalists to support them. Boni de Castellane spent a fortune in getting forty-five Nationalists elected to the municipal council of Paris.

On the one side there were the Jews, the Protestants and the Free Masons; on the other, honest Frenchmen, Good Patriots, calling themselves Nationalists. Rather a simple-minded dividing-up of the multifarious forces in a country!

There were some noisy manifestations. For a long time the Nationalists spoke with pride of the twenty-third of February (1899), the day of President Félix Faure's funeral, when General Roget refused to put himself at the head of the army and overthrow the government. At Auteuil races President Loubet had his hat knocked in by Monsieur X . . .'s walking-stick. The valiant Trublion, incited by too good a lunch and a bellicose lady, had betted he would run into President Loubet calling out: *"À bas Panama."* The government, which was in full force in the Auteuil grand-stand, was alarmed, believing that this gesture was the signal

for a genuine revolt and that the Nationalists would take the Élysée by storm. But the latter hadn't foreseen the assault on the hat.

A little later the Comtesse Blanche de Clermont-Tonnerre, a fiery Royalist, waited with a party of conspirators for the seal which General X . . . was to bring to her and which was to be used for orders to the army and bringing back the Duc d'Orléans to France. The latter was at Brussels, awaiting unmoved the outcome of this conspiracy.

At that time I was often at the Archdeacons and hearing all the time about the great party-leaders, Marcel Habert and Déroulède. The Archdeacons gave a Nationalist ball, followed by a cotillon, at which I had a very good time.

They lived at "la Niche à Fidèle," formerly the Hôtel Morny, 15 Avenue des Champs-Élysées. And on the large Second Empire sofas, covered with red silk, there was set out a very tasty dish of Nationalist ladies: Madame Syveton, Madame Barrès, the wife of General Mercier, the wife of General Zurlinden and Madame Henry Rochefort, the pretty young wife of the old editor of *L'Intransigeant.*

Edmond Archdeacon, a tired look on his face, introduced Déroulède and, just as the cotillon was beginning, the Duchesse d'Uzès made a historic gesture by bringing Déroulède a walking-stick wrapped in tricolour ribbon. Déroulède was a victim of the dazzling Marie-Thérèse's fascination.

François Coppée, with his poetic air and his long locks straying over his broad shoulders, recited Flaubert to me: "And as she was very heavy, they carried her alternately." Was he talking politics? But poor Coppée did not seem to be understanding very much of what was going on.

When Syveton died in pretty scandalous circumstances, Coppée exclaimed at his death-bed: "There he lies with that good smile of his!" Now Syveton, an ambitious don, had thrown himself into Nationalism as at this time of day he would have thrown himself into Communism.

Henry Rochefort, with his enormous plume of white hair, was a valuable recruit to the party. I had personally no faith in the Nationalists' future, but thought them amusing. Public opinion is not moulded in such ways. There was always

something blatantly childish in the Nationalists' outward activities.

Maurice Barrès, a great friend of the Archdeacons, meeting me at their house, came to see us, with the idea. . . . But what, precisely, *was* his idea? I can't quite make out what support we could have given his party. However, one fine afternoon he came, talked politics ardently and charmingly and, at the precise moment when I wanted to talk to him about his fine books (for which I had conceived a passion as a girl and which interested me much, much more than Nationalism), he took up the large top-hat that he had deposited on Monsieur de Clermont-Tonnerre's writing-table and put it on his conquistador's head.

This call was not, however, paid in vain; for a little time afterwards he met Anna de Noailles at my dinner-table. Their friendship dates from that evening.

Barrès remains a great figure, and the mystery of him has not yet emerged into the full light of day. I sometimes wonder if his indeterminate heredity did not make him cling desperately to Lor-

raine, which seems of greater importance in his works than France.

Edmond Archdeacon, *député* for Paris, was very popular with his constituency, the big tradesmen of one half of the Rue de la Paix and one half of the Avénue de l'Opéra, and with the ladies of Les Halles. He used to end up his political addresses with racing-tips—for he had stables of his own. He even died, suddenly, at Auteuil races, forty years of age and in full activity.

Maurice Barrès succeeded him as *député* for the first arrondissement; and Madame Archdeacon, in memory of her husband, helped him all she could. She has a taste for good works and spends a lot of money in their support.

This Nationalist movement over-excited Paris, like some game, but did not penetrate to the heart of the nation. Some young men, who have remained with nothing to do down to this day, stood for Parliament, but few were chosen.

I spent that winter in the rain and mire of Normandy, living in the smell of fresh newsprint, proclamations, election-posters and local cabbage-leaves. *Le Progrès de Conches, Le Journal de Rouen* and *Le Nouvelliste d'Evreux* overflowed our tables. Monsieur de Clermont-Tonnerre entered upon a somewhat tardy campaign which had no other result than to reveal the seamy side of provincial politics.

A certain Pillart-Soulain was patronized by Monsieur de Jarnac and the Royalist clique in the constituency. Pillart-Soulain, a master-mason, stood in order to please his good customers, but the electioneering tours they forced him to make were a waste of time to him and didn't interest him; *"il n'ambitionnait pas,"* as they say in Normandy. To hear Monsieur de Jarnac talk, the fate of France depended on Pillart-Soulain being elected. But Pillart-Soulain was defeated.

In consequence of this electioneering, however, a much more out-of-the-way personage than the unsuccessful candidate was introduced to us.

A little attorney, recommended by my uncle Horace de Choiseul and called Jacques Sadoul, in-

stalled himself in Normandy as secretary to Monsieur de Clermont-Tonnerre. The political work took up little time, and in the evenings Sadoul used to tell us about himself. Though he had the face of a cunning peasant given to underhand dealing, little eyes so deep-set that they disappeared into his face when he laughed, spiky hair and a snub nose, yet his voice was soft and persuasive.

He had, unsuccessfully, followed a rich American into the Far West. Now he hoped that his profession as a lawyer would raise him to higher things. He struck one as a young man who was rather avid than ambitious. The good of others ought to be the common good until such time as it became the individual good of Jacques Sadoul. And he elaborated the plans of a future Commonwealth, in which everything should be held in common under a State disposing alike of wealth and children. A general well-being would be dispensed in a better world, though the latter would be deprived of its wealth, shorn of its beauty and returned to the primitive state of things,—and all this so that Monsieur Jacques Sadoul should not be jarred by the sight of another's riches.

The monotonous voice which uttered such extravagances did not succeed in persuading me, and I refused to hail Sadoul as an apostle. He was completely lacking in the fire of a doctrinairian.

The following summer, to my great stupefaction (for he was no longer Monsieur de Clermont-Tonnerre's secretary), he took up his quarters in Normandy for a solid three weeks and, in the evenings, went on with his sharing-out theories. It is my habit to seek out the motive of actions outwardly innocent. Why should this young man throw away three weeks of his holiday on the banks of the Iton with a family indifferent to him? The answer was not long in coming. The seductive conversations were paid for in the autumn by a fat cheque (nominally loan), of which nothing more has ever been seen, no more than of those which succeeded; for he did not let go of his prey so quickly. It was a poor consolation to have guessed aright in spite of that reassuring manner.

Lunching next to Albert Thomas one day I threw out the name Sadoul, and the Minister informed me that during the war the said Sadoul, dug in in his government department, proved such a nui-

sance that he made him member of a mission to Russia in order to get rid of him.

Russia must have been more profitable to Jacques Sadoul than France or the United States. General B . . . met this anti-militarist in the uniform of a colonel in the Red armies. He was occupying a large house in Moscow, full of works of art which he apparently proposed later to send to Paris. Perhaps he led the Bolshevist bands which massacred French sailors near the Black Sea. I am assured that he did nothing to prevent the murder of Consul Darcy. If he returned to France, it was because Russia had nothing more for him.

I have not read the high-falutin' books which he has written. I know the man too well. The snake hissing with envy is no longer trodden underfoot. He has become a Bolshevist gorilla.

Mornings of Normandy with the dahlias full of dew, the rush under the raised sluice and the canoe apparently gliding amid the hooves of cattle,—how vivid your distant freshness still remains. . . .